

1978

# Tolerance of ambiguity as a component of foster home satisfaction

Kathleen Sampson Eastman  
*Iowa State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/rtd>



Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Eastman, Kathleen Sampson, "Tolerance of ambiguity as a component of foster home satisfaction " (1978). *Retrospective Theses and Dissertations*. 6488.  
<https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/rtd/6488>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Iowa State University Capstones, Theses and Dissertations at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Retrospective Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [digirep@iastate.edu](mailto:digirep@iastate.edu).

## INFORMATION TO USERS

This material was produced from a microfilm copy of the original document. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or patterns which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or "target" for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is "Missing Page(s)". If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting thru an image and duplicating adjacent pages to insure you complete continuity.
2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a large round black mark, it is an indication that the photographer suspected that the copy may have moved during exposure and thus cause a blurred image. You will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame.
3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., was part of the material being photographed the photographer followed a definite method in "sectioning" the material. It is customary to begin photoing at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue photoing from left to right in equal sections with a small overlap. If necessary, sectioning is continued again — beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.
4. The majority of users indicate that the textual content is of greatest value, however, a somewhat higher quality reproduction could be made from "photographs" if essential to the understanding of the dissertation. Silver prints of "photographs" may be ordered at additional charge by writing the Order Department, giving the catalog number, title, author and *specific pages you wish reproduced.*
5. PLEASE NOTE: Some pages may have indistinct print. Filmed as received.

### University Microfilms International

300 North Zeeb Road  
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106 USA  
St. John's Road, Tyler's Green  
High Wycombe, Bucks, England HP10 8HR

7900178

EASTMAN, KATHLEEN SAMPSON  
TOLERANCE OF AMBIGUITY AS A COMPONENT OF  
FOSTER HOME SATISFACTION.

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY, PH.D., 1976

University  
Microfilms  
International 300 N. ZEEB ROAD, ANN ARBOR, MI 48106

Tolerance of ambiguity as a component  
of foster home satisfaction

by

Kathleen Sampson Eastman

A Dissertation Submitted to the  
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of  
The Requirements for the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Departments: Family Environment  
Professional Studies  
Joint Majors: Family Environment  
Education

Approved:

Signature was redacted for privacy.

In Charge of Major Work

Signature was redacted for privacy.

For the Major Departments

Signature was redacted for privacy.

For the Graduate College

Iowa State University  
Ames, Iowa

1978

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER II. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE	5
System Openness	5
System Integration	7
Vague System Identity	10
Morphogenesis and Morphostasis	12
CHAPTER III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	15
Sources of Ambiguity in the Foster Care System	15
Foster Home Studies	28
CHAPTER IV. METHODOLOGY	36
The Questionnaire	36
Budner's Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale	37
Foster Home Satisfaction Scale	39
The Sample	40
Statistical Procedures	43
Hypotheses	44
CHAPTER V. RESULTS	46
Tolerance of Ambiguity	47
Foster Home Satisfaction	49
Foster Home Satisfaction Categorized by Tolerance of Ambiguity	52
Prediction of Foster Home Satisfaction by Tolerance of Ambiguity	54

	Page
Prediction of Program Status by Tolerance of Ambiguity and Foster Home Satisfaction	55
CHAPTER VI. DISCUSSION	58
Results	58
Limitations of the Present Study	63
Recommendations for Further Research	64
Implications for Policy	65
CHAPTER VII. SUMMARY	69
REFERENCES	71
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	77
APPENDIX A: TABLES	79
APPENDIX B: LETTERS	83
APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE, SCALES, AND PERMISSION LETTER	90

## CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

The primary focus of this study will be to examine whether tolerance of ambiguity affects a foster parent's satisfaction with the foster home program. Tolerance of ambiguity refers to how well foster parents cope with uncertainty due to inadequate cues or structure because a situation is new, complex, or contradictory. Foster home satisfaction is a measure of how pleased or gratified foster parents are with the foster home program. The satisfaction level takes into account many aspects of the foster home program--from relationships to policies to the children themselves.

Foster parents are called upon to cope with a great deal of uncertainty as the entire placement process and foster care system are permeated with uncertainty. This uncertainty may affect the foster parents' level of satisfaction.

The length of stay is one major source of uncertainty. Although foster care is, by definition, temporary care, temporariness remains undefined and ranges from a brief stay of a few days to many years. This uncertainty about the length of placement makes it difficult to know how to relate and how completely to integrate the foster child into the family system (Wilkes, 1974). Foster families also must cope with unclear roles, high worker turnover, diverse agency policies and procedures, inadequate case plans for foster children, high placement turnover, legal/judicial confusion, often unknown outcomes, and an uninformed public.

Foster care services in the United States have long been plagued by insufficient resources. This scarcity of resources has become more

critical with the increased use of foster care and the diminished use of institutional care as recent philosophies of childrearing have discouraged institutionalization of children and have encouraged the trend toward community-based services and normalization. Although foster care is recognized as far from ideal it is deemed preferable to institutional care for it provides a family setting for the child within the community (Fanshel, 1960; Rose, 1962). Therefore, foster homes are increasingly being asked to absorb children that in the past would have been institutionalized (Levine, 1972; Rose, 1962).

This devaluation of institutional care has drastically altered the foster care population. Hard-to-place children who remain for an extended period of time comprise a large number of the foster care population. And not only has there been an increase in children with serious emotional and developmental disorders placed in foster care but also an increase in the number of youth who are status offenders. The juvenile justice system has also turned away from institutionalization as the preferred mode of treatment and has moved toward community-based services. "Foster family living has decidedly become the preferred form of care for most children who are separated from their families" (Fanshel, 1960, p. 1).

Although foster care is considered the most desirable resource for children needing substitute care it remains exceedingly difficult not only to recruit new foster homes but also to maintain existing homes. Foster homes are known to have a rather short duration. Many homes exit from the foster home program within the first year or following the first placement (George, 1970; Kay, 1971a; Levine, 1972; Radinsky, 1970). Recruitment of



new homes also remains a continual challenge. In Glassberg's (1965) study the ratio of families accepted into the foster home program for the one year period of 1962-1963 was one approved home for every sixteen inquiries. Incorrectly one could assume that the agency was rejecting large numbers of applicants. Such was not the case. Rather the majority of those who inquired into foster parenthood chose not to complete the application process; these families withdrew their applications primarily because they felt they either could not cope with the temporary nature of placement or felt they could not bear the financial burden of additional children. According to Madison and Schapiro (1970), "A major deterrent to foster parent applications is the possibility of 'losing' the foster child; many families will not take a child for an indefinite 'temporary' period, but are ready to apply for long-term or permanent care" (p. 133).

Because of difficulties in both maintaining and recruiting foster homes and because of the need for their increased use additional knowledge must be sought as to factors that affect foster parent participation in foster home programs. This research project will primarily study tolerance of ambiguity as a component of foster home satisfaction. Such questions as whether ambiguity affects foster home satisfaction, whether a foster parent's satisfaction level can be predicted by knowing his/her tolerance of ambiguity, and whether a foster parent's program status (categorized by homes in the program and those that have left in the past four years) can be predicted by knowing his/her tolerance of ambiguity and satisfaction level will be examined. Additional questions such as whether tolerance of ambiguity or satisfaction affect foster parent's program

status will also be researched. The study will also examine whether gender differences exist as to tolerance of ambiguity and satisfaction. By asking these questions additional knowledge should be gained as to factors that affect foster parent participation in foster home programs.

If the hypothesis is confirmed the knowledge about tolerance of ambiguity and foster home satisfaction has practical implications for placement planning. If a family has a high tolerance of ambiguity it should be capable of coping with more unknowns and greater uncertainty than a foster family with a low tolerance of ambiguity and still remain quite satisfied with the program. However, if a family with a low tolerance of ambiguity is to remain satisfied with the program it might be necessary to take measures to reduce the ambiguity by more clearly defining the foster care situations in which they participate. If it was felt that ambiguity could not be reduced within the foster care system and yet remains a factor in foster home satisfaction then future recruitment efforts would need to be made that take a person's tolerance of ambiguity into account.

## CHAPTER II. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

## System Openness

The foster family differs from the modern nuclear family in that the foster family is an open system whereas the nuclear family is best described as semi-closed. Fanshel (1966) in his research commented repeatedly of the openness of the foster family system. He saw many parallels between the foster family and families that are characterized by the Gemeinschaft style of living. "The modern urban middle-class family has been characteristically described as a compact nuclear group enclosed in a tight circle . . . anybody who is not a member of the nuclear family is forbidden entrance, including grandma. By way of contrast, the foster family is open to complete strangers. This openness is more characteristic of folk type societies than of modern industrial societies" (Fanshel, 1966, p. 15).

Lawder et al. (1974) emphasized the uniqueness of foster families because of their willingness to include nonrelated children into the family's intraspace. However, a foster family opens itself not only to nonrelated children but also to agency staff and at times to natural parents as well. The agency's and child's access to the family's intraspace is in marked contrast to the general accessibility of the modern nuclear family's intraspace. According to Hill (1971), "Viewing the family as a boundary maintaining system suggests that it is partially closed, semi-autonomous, and when coping with internal issues may seem to

exclude the world from its affairs" (p. 13). Although the modern nuclear family meets this definition, the foster family fails to do so.

The entrance of agency personnel into the family's interpersonal system can create considerable anxiety for both the foster parents and the child. Because the foster home is supervised by the agency the relationship of foster parent to social worker is one where social workers are often viewed as authoritarian parents. According to Maluccio (1966), "the nature of the relationship is conducive to the kind of reaction in the foster parents known in psychiatry as 'transference,' with the foster parents unconsciously viewing the caseworker as their own parent and the agency as the ultimate parental authority" (p. 70).

Foster families are open systems. Their ambiguity of boundary and their willingness to allow foster children and agency personnel into their family system clearly indicate this. "A system is open if its boundaries are not well defined or have breaks that enable the system to interact with its environment" (Banathy, 1973, p. 8).

Although a certain degree of openness is necessary if a system is to grow and prosper, too much openness can be detrimental to a system. "A totally open system . . . implies totally unstable, unpredictable, and random input and output. This means the absence of specified and stated requirements, demands, constraints, resources, and other factors that define what the system is" (Banathy, 1973, pp. 8-9). When a foster family is too open it risks entropy through the loss of its identity. Monane (1967) states that "Identity is the core of a system's uniqueness. It is what sets it apart from other systems" (p. 113).

The ambiguity that results from too much openness in the foster family system may be one of the primary causes for foster home dissatisfaction and dissolution. Many foster parents may choose not to accept the uncertainty inherent in the situation. According to Banathy (1973), "People generally prefer to operate in closed systems. Even when a system is open, we often tend to make it less so by narrowing the breaks in the system boundary in order to decrease the interaction and trade between the system and its environment. We often do this because we feel more secure when we operate on well-known ground surrounded by familiar landmarks" (p. 15).

#### System Integration

Foster families, because they are open systems, often suffer dissonance regarding how completely to integrate a child into their family system. They have to deal with such questions as to whom does the child really belong, what will the placement outcome be, and for how long will the child remain in the home. With these unknowns it is difficult to know how fully to incorporate the child into the family system.

All families must deal with separateness and connectedness of family members. "Separateness and connectedness are the underlying conditions of a family's life and . . . a basic family process is the effort to achieve a satisfactory pattern of separateness and connectedness" (Handel, 1967, p. 529). This effort to achieve a balance between separateness and connectedness is particularly relevant to foster families as they struggle to

come to terms with how fully to incorporate foster children into their family system.

Foster parents remain torn between the opposite poles of not including the child enough into their family to including the child so much that the child's departure is extremely difficult for both the child and the family. "The real problem for foster parents is that a foster child actually does not and never can belong to them. Because of this they become caught in a struggle over how much of themselves they can involve and risk in this relationship" (Fanshel, 1966, p. 7).

If the foster child is not to remain in the foster family (and he or she rarely does) then it is inadvisable to totally incorporate the child into their family. When the family does totally incorporate the foster child the separation and loss can be a most painful experience. "It is commonly observed that one of the hazards in the placement of children in foster homes is that the parents will come to feel such strong attachments to these children that separating from them is a highly traumatic event, both for themselves and for the children" (Fanshel, 1966, p. 59).

The integration of foster children into the foster family system is made more difficult by not knowing the length of placement. Often placements begin as temporary short-term placements and become indefinite long-term placements. The difference between long- and short-term placements may become unclear. "The lines between these functions also seemed to be blurred--temporary care turning into long-term care in a kind of man-who-came-to-dinner fashion ('They asked us to take her for 3 months, but she's been with us for 3 years')" (Close, 1971, p. 140). And with the increased length of placement comes increased anxiety and attachment. "The longer a

component stays with a system, too, the stronger appears its deterministic clutch upon him" (Monane, 1967, p. 17). With the long-term placement dissolution is decidedly painful. According to Monane (1967), the longer a system lasts the more difficult is dissolution. The foster family that really cares for a child where the placement extends indefinitely for several years are faced with a heavy emotional burden. "Long-term foster parents are perhaps society's biggest gamblers. When they begin, they may not know how high the stakes are going to be" (Rowlands, 1973, p. 94).

Because most children do not remain in care foster families must come to terms with the temporary nature of foster care. Knowing that a foster child will not forever remain a member of a family alters that family's perspective toward the child. Therefore, temporariness of a family member is an important component of the foster family system (Monane, 1967).

How fully a family incorporates a child into their family system may be largely affected by the family's ability to deal with the uncertainty regarding the temporariness of a system component, the foster child. Much of this uncertainty is displayed by foster parents in the separation anxiety they experience in regard to a child's departure as separation anxiety often permeates the entire placement process. Repeatedly foster home staff are requested to assist foster parents with their feelings of loss and impending separation. According to Bennis and Slater (1968), these feelings are often evident in systems characterized by temporariness.

### Vague System Identity

Because uncertainty often pervades the foster care system, and consequently the foster family system, it is appropriate to talk about a foster family as a system that has vague identity. When Monane (1967) speaks of a system and its identity, he makes reference to three ideotypes: monolithic, multiple, and vague. Of Monane's three ideotypes foster families fall into the category of systems with vague identity. A system with vague identity is primarily known for its inadequate screen. Therefore, the gatekeeping portion of the system is uncertain of what is to enter and what is to exit from the system. Vague system identity is particularly evident with most systems in the process of becoming, systems in the early stages of their development, as these systems have not yet clearly emerged to define themselves.

Foster homes are systems in the process of becoming. Foster homes are known to suffer from a lack of role clarity and clearly defined norms. Through various court rulings (Katz, 1976) foster homes are attempting to define their role, their norms, and thereby, their identity. With increased norm clarity and role definition may come greater satisfaction not only for foster parents but for foster children as well. "Component welfare appears enhanced where norms are clear, and components are aware of them. The system here becomes predictable; expectations are possible, the consequences of component action shine clearly. Children reared in homes of norm clarity are found to be happier and more successful in adjusting to the norm requirements of school and play" (Monane, 1967, pp. 119-120).



The early stages of foster parenting create the greatest amount of vague system identity for they are asked to fulfill a role which is not only new and unknown to them but also ill-defined. This vague system identity can only add to the stress and breakdown of early placements of foster children that the literature characterizes as being so common (Aldridge & Cautley, 1975; George, 1970; Kay, 1971a; Levine, 1972; Radinsky, 1970).

The lack of norm consensus also creates blurring of the boundary. The screen, which serves the gatekeeping function, has difficulty knowing what to include and what to exclude from the family's boundaries. Pre-placement visits help in this determination but boundary confusion remains a major source of concern for foster families. This is partially evidenced by the fact that although the foster family and the agency both attempt to screen in the appropriate children and screen out the inappropriate children nonetheless 41% of all placements are unsuccessful in that they are terminated before a child is ready to leave foster care (Festinger, 1975). This difficulty with inclusion and exclusion of children goes beyond physically including or excluding a child into the family system. Much more important is the psychological inclusion or exclusion of the child into the family.

Foster families suffer from vague system identity largely because a family seeks to define itself by its boundaries. The system, therefore, cannot identify itself if it cannot define its boundaries. Although a foster family is called upon to determine what is within its system, the unclear boundary makes it difficult to differentiate the family from its environment. "If a family system fails to develop a territory, it

virtually ceases to exist, for it becomes indistinguishable from the larger space. It is in the working out of its bounding activities, and marking off how it is the same or different from those around it, that a family operationally defines itself to the community" (Kantor & Lehr, 1975, p. 68).

### Morphogenesis and Morphostasis

Not only can too much openness be detrimental to the system's well-being and sense of identity but so likewise can too much change. It is mentioned repeatedly in the literature that a foster child is required to undergo frequent moves. A foster child can expect to average 2.7 moves while in foster care (Bryce & Ehlert, 1971). This means that the child must often adjust to different family systems. While a child's movement in care is well-documented the changes that the foster family must undergo when children are being placed and re-placed is not explicitly known. Just as a foster child may have a hard time knowing to whom he belongs the foster family may have a hard time knowing who belongs to them. Each new foster child impacts on the family in some manner, and this impact may be affected by his length of stay and basic personality. "In either the foster family or the institution the Gestalt is altered by the introduction of a new member into its dynamic system" (Kline & Overstreet, 1972, p. 75).

The system experiences stress with each new entrant although the early entrants into the system create the greatest amount of stress. Just as nuclear families must make considerable changes when the first

baby arrives or grandma comes to live within the household, likewise foster families experience stress with the arrival of children and their respective social workers (Fanshel, 1966). This need for change and adaptability within the foster family system calls for a family that has morphogenic qualities. The system needs to be able to undergo change and transition while not yet changing so rapidly that it cannot tolerate the stress. "Sudden change in a system's components . . . may tear the system apart" (Monane, 1967, p. 144). To undergo morphogenesis too rapidly leads to system breakdown, and yet an optimal level of morphogenesis is required of a foster family if it is to function effectively.

A system is most affected by the early changes it is asked to make--for example, the arrival of the first child is more traumatic than the arrival of later ones as the first child requires more adjustments to be made for the foster family must learn what having a foster child in their home is like and what working closely with an agency involves. They must develop patterns of relating that are new and unknown to them. Considerable transition and adjustment are necessary. Because early entrants are especially stress-producing the literature indicates that considerable support needs to be given parents in preparation for the entrance of children into their home, particularly with the first entrant as foster homes have considerable difficulty making the transition from nuclear family to foster family (Aldridge & Cautley, 1975; George, 1970; Kay, 1971a; Levine, 1972; Radinsky, 1970).

A reasonable question to ask is how much stress can a foster family be asked to cope with? When placement demands are made on the agency these demands are transferred to the foster parents. There is the

frequent pressure placed on a home to accept one additional child even if this places the home over its limit to emotionally provide for any of the children in their home. Therefore, all too often foster homes are pushed beyond their resources by the agency's demands (Kay, 1971a; Wilkes, 1974). Many foster parents then withdraw from the foster home program as they cannot continue to cope with the unrealistic demands being made on them. The foster family often cannot be as adaptable as the agency requires and so they choose to exit the program. A way to assess realistically the coping capacity of a foster family and their ability to tolerate stress is needed. Each foster family must have a certain degree of stability and unity to remain viable as a foster family system. Some morphostatic qualities are needed to keep the system a viable entity. At the same time a foster family must have some morphogenic qualities that allow for adaptability and flexibility within the foster family system. The foster family system must have both stability and flexibility. "The type of social system that functions most effectively appears to be one in which rules both define interaction patterns to establish some degree of stability, and at the same time, provide procedures for changing patterns to maintain flexibility" (Miller et al., 1976, p. 23).

## CHAPTER III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

## Sources of Ambiguity in the Foster Care System

The foster care system in the United States is one where complexity and confusion abound. Difficult decisions are made daily that affect the lives of people on little more than a trial-and-error basis. Some of the factors that add to the uncertainty permeating the foster care system include: the lack of role clarity for foster parents, the rapid turnover of agency staff, diverse agency policies and practices, inadequate case planning for the foster children in placement, high placement breakdowns for foster children in care, uncertainty in the legal/judicial realm, the often unknown length of placement, the often unknown outcome of placement, and the community's lack of understanding as to the nature of foster care.

Role confusion

When a child enters foster care, parental responsibility for him is shared by the natural parents, the agency, and the foster parents (Galaway, 1972). Because these parental responsibilities are not clearly delineated and clearly understood by all concerned, considerable role strain and ambiguity result (Kennedy, 1973). Sharing parental responsibilities is unconventional, "it is difficult to find suddenly that you the parents, do not make all the decisions. About the daily care, yes; about problems within the home, yes. But final responsibility for the child lies with the agency . . ." (Hikel, 1973, p. 27).

The problem of lack of role clarity is compounded by the agency's indecision as to its perception of the foster parent. Again and again the question comes up as to whether foster parents are clients or colleagues

(Lawder, 1964; Jones, 1975). Foster parents are providers of a service and an extension of the child care staff. They are a valuable member of a child treatment team (Gabrovic, 1969). And yet foster homes are supervised and under agency control. Foster parents clearly are not agency clients, yet they are aware of the agency's power over their lives. The agency has the power to license their home and to revoke it. The agency decides whether to place or remove a child. Foster parents may choose to accept a placement or request a removal, but their power is clearly less than the agency's power. Because of this power differential many authors repeatedly remind agency staff that foster parents are not clients but rather providers of a service (Daniels & Brown, 1973; Reistroffer, 1968). According to Kline and Overstreet (1972) a study was conducted where foster parents were hired as agency staff. Even though hired in this capacity they still continued to view themselves primarily in the foster parenting role. This may serve to indicate that foster parents may not be as caught up in the client-colleague differentiation as the staff. Foster parents may simply view themselves as substitute or supplemental parents and not as either colleagues or clients.

According to Babcock (1965a) foster parents are capable of distinguishing the difference between their parental relationship toward their own children and toward foster children. "They differentiated well what constituted a parental relationship to own children and a foster relationship to the foster children" (p. 489a).

The real problem then may not be the colleague-client dispute but rather a lack of understanding regarding the foster parent-social worker relationship. Often times foster parents and social workers perceive

certain tasks to be the responsibility of the other. When foster parents perceive that it is the agency's responsibility to provide transportation, meet medical appointments, attend school conferences, and then finds it necessary to perform these tasks, foster parents feel unrealistic demands are being placed on them. Or when the foster parent takes the initiative, the agency may feel that the foster parent is overstepping his/her boundaries. The real problem is not knowing where the boundaries are as foster parenthood remains an ill-defined social role. According to Davids (1973), clearly delineated norms have yet to emerge.

The structure of the social worker-foster parent relationship cannot be dismissed as unimportant and inconsequential. Their mutual role definition has a decided impact on the placement of foster children (Reistroffer, 1972). How successfully the social worker and foster parent understand their respective roles may influence the quality of the child's placement. "The stresses stemming from these role conflicts may even be more of a handicap to foster parents than any lack of knowledge about child development . . ." (Galaway, 1972, p. 32).

The relationship of social worker to foster parent is exceedingly difficult to define. Foster parents do need support and encouragement from the agency, but "It is not a treatment relationship since the ultimate goal is service, not for the foster parent, but for the child and his own parents" (Wires, 1972, p. 53). It also is further confused by the reality of the treatment relationship between foster parent and foster child. The child is placed in the foster family for a corrective parenting experience which in itself is treatment (Gedanken, 1966). Thomas (1967) also indicates that foster parents help a child "by providing

corrective experiences to counteract the effects of earlier unsatisfactory experiences" (p. 61).

#### Worker variables

According to Fanshel (1960), "it is a disturbing fact that decisions about children going into foster care are being made daily under conditions of great uncertainty" (p. 254). Most of these decisions are being made by social workers. These social workers tend to be female, have a Bachelor's degree in the behavioral sciences, and have less than two years work experience (Aldridge & Cautley, 1975). Because of the inexperience and youth of the workers stress in decision-making is heightened. Rather than live with the stress many workers leave the foster care system within a brief period of time. This leaves a new worker to cope with what they left behind, making consequential decisions based on inadequate knowledge where often lack of continuity prevails (Rosenblatt & Mayer, 1970).

This rapid change of workers can only serve to have a detrimental effect on the foster care system. According to Aldridge and Cautley (1975) there was a change of workers in 41% of their placements. This has dramatic implications when one realizes that Shapiro (1972) found that a child's placement was influenced by the stability of the social worker. This held whether the child was in long-term or short-term care. In Shapiro's followup study (1973) it was found that worker stability positively affected discharge of children from foster care within their first two years of placement.

Since it has been demonstrated that foster children are affected by worker changes might not foster parents be likewise affected by worker



changes? When a foster parent does have a good relationship established with a worker and then has that worker depart to whom does that foster parent turn for support? According to Aldridge and Cautley (1975), a substantial number of placements needed more attention and involvement than they were obtaining. In their study one-third of all placements were terminated at the request of the foster parents; it was felt that inadequate support played a large role in these placement breakdowns. According to Aldridge and Cautley (1975), unless the social worker perceived the child to be one who was difficult to maintain in placement there were few contacts made with the foster family. Apparently, with one-third of the placements being terminated at the request of foster parents the workers are misperceiving the needs of foster parents or are unable to meet the needs that they recognize exist.

High worker turnover creates anxiety for foster parents. According to Kline and Overstreet (1972), "the loss of a caseworker can set off a chain reaction in the foster care system" (p. 231). Foster parents may become anxious because they do not know the resultant impact that worker change will bring about and, therefore, it leaves them feeling vulnerable to the opinion of the new worker.

#### Diversity in agency policies and procedures

There is a lack of uniformity in agency policies and procedures in the area of foster care. States vary in their foster care regulations as do counties. Private and public agencies also have their differences. Even individual workers within the various agencies differ in their interpretations of the various policies and procedures so that even within one

agency considerable confusion may result as to what exactly the agency policy and procedure on a given item is (Close, 1971). The diversity of agency policies impacts on the whole range of child welfare services from the length of placement of the children to the various arrangements with the court system to even the amount of financial reimbursement given to foster parents. According to Levine (1972), the foster care payment rate varies among states, counties, and agencies, and this rate variation is more related to the degree of affluence of the agency, county, or state than it is to the actual need of a child in placement.

#### Service plans for children

In the past all too often children entered foster care where they remained as no real planning took place on their behalf. This provided no clear direction and made the child feel as though he were caught in a maze with no way out. "From foster families and even more from foster children we have heard how painful the continuing experience can be made by the agency. This dilemma is intensified when the natural parent is only indefinitely involved in the situation, without any clarification of plans for the parent, child, and foster family" (Radinsky, 1970, p. 70). To help counteract this unfortunate and all too frequently occurring situation many states have declared that service plans for children in foster care are essential and these plans must be reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis. Texas has deemed case plans so important that they have incorporated the requirement for them into their minimum standards for child-placing agencies. "A plan of service shall be developed which specifies each child's needs and the way these needs will be met . . . .

The plan shall include the objectives of placement and the estimated length of stay" (State of Texas, 1976, p. 9). Many of these case plans now come up for quarterly review within the agency and yearly review by the court system. This serves to eliminate some of the uncertainty and insures that continual efforts are being made on the child's behalf to make progress toward the stated goals and objectives.

#### Legal/judicial realm

One of the crucial concerns within the judicial/legal realm is deciding what are the residual rights of natural parents, what are the rights of the foster child, and what are the rights of foster parents. "All of these relationships take place within a legal frame of reference although many of the more subtle legal questions remain ill defined and untested" (Lawder et al., 1974, p. 13).

In a recent court ruling the U.S. District Court ruled in the *Organization of Foster Families v. Dumpson* that foster parents do have the opportunity to be heard in a pre-removal hearing if the foster child has been in their care for one year or longer. The court made this ruling on the grounds that the pre-removal hearing actually was a right of the child as his future as in the balance (Katz, 1976). The pre-removal hearing serves to protect both the foster child and the foster parent from the agency's almost absolute power regarding placement moves.

In another recent case the California Court of Appeals ruled that should a foster child not be able to return to his own home the persons with whom the child had been living (namely the foster parents) would be given first consideration in custody decisions (Katz, 1976). This ruling

supports the concept of psychological parenting as espoused by Goldstein et al. (1973), and it is expected that many future court decisions will also support this concept. The California Court of Appeals' ruling challenges many of the existing policies and practices of agencies throughout this country as many agencies have been hesitant to allow adoption of children by foster parents unless the child has a significant disability which renders him an unlikely candidate for adoption. This ruling places policies of many agencies in question and it is inevitable that there will be continuing litigation on this matter. The issue of foster parent adoption is one of the most sensitive issues that foster parents and agency personnel are called upon to negotiate.

In the everyday life of foster children and foster parents the local domestic relations court has a significant impact. In many courts it is difficult to obtain a court date and after being placed on the docket there are frequent postponements and extensions of temporary custody. These postponements serve to create uncertainty and ambiguity.

#### Difficulties in maintaining placements

When a child enters foster care a home is selected for him with the goal that the child will remain in this home until he no longer is in need of foster care. However, this objective often goes unmet. Within the child welfare system one of the most disturbing problems is that the child often is called upon to move. "Herstein has pointed out that replacement of children is one of the major hazards of foster family care. He calls it 'one of the skeletons in the closet of child welfare practice'" (Fanshel, 1961, p. 17). The magnitude of the problem cannot be over-

estimated. In Ambinder's study (1965) of 410 boys in foster care it was found that when boys were placed at the age of two they averaged 6.60 placements by the age of fifteen. And when the boys were placed between the ages of ten and twelve they averaged 5.16 placements by the age of fifteen. Other studies have also confirmed a high level of placement breakdown. Festinger (1975) reported that only 41% of children in foster care experience one placement. Bryce and Ehlert (1971) found that although 44% of the children in their study had not moved after their initial placement nonetheless the frequency of moves for children in placement averaged 2.7, with those children having moved once most likely to move again.

Clearly this amount of movement by foster children is a disgrace to the foster care system. How can these children begin to have their basic developmental needs met with so little security? The children live in a continual state of impermanence and uncertainty. Toffler (1970) spoke of people in the future maintaining that home is wherever you find it. Foster children find this to be their present reality.

Since children are aware of their precarious position they frequently test limits and engage in behavior that makes it more difficult to maintain them in placement. They, however, feel a deep need to find out whether or not they have a place or will be moving again (Watson & Boverman, 1971). For foster children the worst punishment is replacement--not a spanking or being grounded (Geiser, 1973). And children going through placement and replacement process do not exist in an emotional vacuum. They often become bitter, more distant, and more detached. "One

child in the process of replacement expressed his bitterness well, 'The social workers are the bat and I'm just the ball they sock from one place to another'" (Young, 1950, p. 252).

Replacements affect the foster children but they also affect the foster home in whose residence they have lived. With a placement failure foster parents must deal with a sense of guilt and failure. A substantial number of placements end at the foster parents' request. According to Aldridge and Cautley (1975), one-third of the placements were terminated at the request of foster parents. Their research indicated that foster parents were not receiving the support and encouragement they needed in order to continue foster parenting.

Research indicates that foster homes are particularly vulnerable to breakdown during or after the first placement (Levine, 1972; Radinsky, 1970). The first placement creates stress as foster parents are asked to assume an unfamiliar role. "It can be generally assumed that first placements are likely to be more stressful than placements coming later when the experience is less unfamiliar" (Kay, 1971a, p. 72). Many new foster parents do not adjust to the demands and stresses of foster parenthood and choose to end their involvement with the foster home program. George (1970) also indicated that although the risk for breakdown is high during the first year it steadily diminishes over time.

Agencies are aware of the special vulnerability of new homes as "caseworkers often feel that the first separation from a child makes or breaks a foster mother as a foster parent" (McCoy, 1962, p. 226). Although agencies seem aware of the difficulties of new homes they have done

little to ameliorate the situation by providing additional support services to new foster homes.

Not only might case worker availability reduce placement breakdown but so also might pre-placement visits by allowing for a better degree-of-fit between foster parent and foster child. The pre-placement visit can help determine whether or not the placement will be appropriate and can identify potential areas of conflict. Early identification helps assist in amelioration of problems before they create family conflict and breakdown. Aldridge and Cautley (1975) found that children having pre-placement visits fared significantly better than children not having pre-placement visits.

Increasingly agencies are encouraging the use of pre-placement visits. The minimum Standards for Child-Placing Agencies in Texas (1976) state, "Except in emergency placements or in the placement of infants under six months old, children shall visit with the foster family before placement" (p. 8). The use of pre-placement visits is one small way of reducing the ambiguity inherent in the foster care system.

#### Length of stay

Throughout the literature there is much discussion as to the nature of foster care. Some authors argue strongly that foster care is temporary care whereas others argue that foster care is, in reality, not temporary care but rather long-term and all-too-often permanent care. Fanshel's research (1971) indicated that there is a major exodus of foster children from foster care within the first year of placement. Jenkins' (1967) data indicated that approximately half of all placements are under three months

length with 25% of the children's placements being of more than two years duration. These studies are the more optimistic ones regarding children's length of stay in foster care. Maas (1969) found that only 24% of the children left foster care in less than three years. Rothschild (1974) found that 70% of the placements were of three or more years length. Glassberg (1965) reported that in 1961 in Philadelphia one-fourth of the children had been in foster care no less than seven years. And according to Claburn et al. (1976), "studies of foster care have demonstrated conclusively that a large proportion of foster children remain in care in excess of 5 years, frequently for most of their childhood" (p. 395). Bryce and Ehlert (1971) found that the average length of stay for children was approximately three years.

Maas (1969) argues that when foster care is of several years duration the concept of temporariness is not given support. The truth is that foster care is both temporary care and long-term care. Within the child welfare system there are children whose stay in foster care ranges from a few days to several months. These placements would be readily classified as temporary placements. However, there are also children within the foster care system who remain indefinitely until having gone through a multitude of foster homes they finally reach their age of majority. For them foster care is clearly permanent care.

In the life of a foster family whether a child stays for a few months or a few years the indeterminate length of stay creates a feeling of impermanence and temporariness. The foster family does not know how fully to incorporate the child into their family system as they do not know for



how long the child is to remain. This vagueness about duration of stay is a source of considerable stress for foster families (Kline & Overstreet, 1972; Wilkes, 1974). According to Dinnage and Pringle (1967), "the fact that the likely duration of the foster situation is in many cases unknown . . . adds to the uncertainty and hence, insecurity, inherent in the whole framework" (p. 29).

### Outcome

Not only has the length of a child's placement been difficult to predict but so also has been the outcome of the placement. "The field is nowhere near the point of being able consistently to match the child and the environment in such a way that the outcome can be predicted, even in broad terms" (Lawder et al., 1974, p. 6). A number of research studies have been conducted that examine placement outcomes. Jenkins and Norman (1972) found that the majority of foster children do return home after placement. There is a particularly high return rate of foster children when the primary reason for placement has been the physical illness of the mother (Fanshel, 1971). Fanshel's study also indicated that should an unmarried mother suffer from mental illness a prolonged separation of parent and child is likely to occur. Festinger (1975) found in her study, that dealt extensively with outcome related to court reviews, that when the court was called upon to render a decision in child custody cases the outcome was more likely to be adoption than return of the child to the natural parents. These studies indicate there is a recent trend emerging that is attempting to determine pertinent variables that influence outcome of children in foster care.

### Community understanding

In 1977 a study was conducted in El Paso, Texas dealing with the community's awareness of their foster home program (DeBruyn Advertising Agency, 1977). One-thousand households were interviewed by telephone. Their findings indicated that the general public knew relatively little about their foster home program. The public had a very vague and unclear picture as to who foster children really were and why they entered the foster care system. This is not surprising when one is aware of the difficulties that those working closely with foster care have in defining it.

### Foster Home Studies

#### Demographic variables

Many foster home studies have attempted to determine whether demographic variables affect foster home satisfaction or foster home success. The results of these studies are basically conflicting and it seems that few correlations exist that aid the practitioner in projecting the satisfaction or success of the foster homes.

Numerous studies (Cautley & Aldridge, 1975; Fanshel, 1970; Mandell, 1973; Parker, 1966; Rowe, 1976) relate foster care variables to socioeconomic class. Whereas Rowe (1976) found that social class was unrelated to the quality of fostering, Parker's study indicated that the lower socioeconomic class was the most successful at fostering, and Cautley

(1975) in her study found the opposite. Mandell favored the lower class for fostering because of their greater tolerance, but Fanshel had his reservations and expressed considerable concern regarding the childrearing attitudes of the lower class.

Two research studies examine foster parent employment as it relates to foster home satisfaction or foster home success. Gass (1972) in her research attempted to determine whether differences existed between successful and less successful foster parents. The results indicated that the most successful foster families had fathers who were satisfied with their level of employment, whereas the least successful foster families had fathers who aspired to higher levels of employment. In Kraus' study (1971) the impact of a foster mother's employment was studied. He found that "foster mothers who worked fulltime were as successful as those who did not work, which indicates that the usual reluctance of social agencies to place a child in a foster home when the mother works is unwarranted" (p. 70).

In Murphy's study (1968) the outcomes of foster children as adults were examined in relation to several variables, including the variable of residential location. It was found that foster children made the best adjustments in rural and city homes, and they experienced the most difficulty in suburban homes.

Kraus (1971), Parker (1966), and Rowe (1976) sought to determine if age of the foster mother related to foster care success. According to

Kraus (1971), placements were more successful if the foster mother was 46 years old or older. Likewise, in Parker's study (1966) the older foster mothers were more successful than the younger mothers. Although these two studies favored older foster mothers, Rowe (1976) found that the age of the mother was unrelated to success at fostering.

Another variable that has been frequently used in foster home success studies is the number of own children of foster parents. Hunter (1964) and George (1970) found that the most successful foster parents have no natural children in the home. Parker (1966) found that childless couples did the best at fostering. Although these studies found that homes with no natural children presently in the household were the most successful foster homes, Kraus (1971) found placements to be most successful if foster parents had two children of their own. Wolins (1959) found in his study that the superior foster homes had two or three natural children. Rowe (1976) found no relationship between successful fostering and the number of own children.

In a recent study Hunter et al. (1977) sought to determine if satisfaction was related to the length of placement and found "foster parents could not be differentiated in satisfaction level by whether they had long-term or short-term placements" (p. 8). This study also compared the satisfaction of foster parents in public and private agencies. Surprisingly, they found that "no significant differences were found in overall satisfaction between the foster parents affiliated with a private agency and those affiliated with the state" (p. 13).

### Relationship variables

Not only are there studies that largely examine demographic variables as they affect foster home success or foster home satisfaction but there are also studies that look at relationship variables, particularly those that foster parents have with the agency and the child.

Aldridge and Cautley (1975) found that a positive foster mother-social worker relationship in the first six months of foster care increased the mother's satisfaction with her role and enhanced the possibilities of success as a foster parent. The same study found foster fathers interested in developing a relationship with workers and desiring more frequent contact with workers. This finding is important because the foster father's positive feeling toward worker visitation was found to be a predictor for foster home success. Aldridge and Cautley's study (1975) indicated that attitudes related to foster home satisfaction are formed early in the fostering process. This would reinforce Kadushin's belief (1970) that if early in the placement process the social worker expresses confidence in the foster parents there is an increased likelihood for success. According to Kadushin (1970), "expectations are a powerful force in determining outcome. The self-fulfilling prophecy, the placebo effect, and the Rosenthal effect all point to this same phenomenon" (p. 230).

The foster parents' relationship with the child also affects foster home satisfaction. According to Trasler (1960), both foster parents and child must develop a mutually satisfactory relationship for the placement

to be stable and secure. It appears that the foster mother's relationship with the child is a more significant factor than the father's relationship to the child. According to Simonds (1973), "relationship with the foster mother was the key relationship that determined the success of the placement" (p. 87).

For foster mothers the direct involvement with children in need of care was a major source of gratification. "Close proximity to children and direct interaction with them loomed as the major incentive for becoming foster parents" (Fanshel, 1966, p. 137). In his same study Fanshel (1966) found that foster mothers caring for infants had higher satisfaction with their parenting role than foster mothers caring for older children. He also found that foster mothers caring for infants obtained private gratifications whereas foster mothers caring for older children obtained social gratifications through fostering.

Foster fathers found direct involvement with the children to be less satisfying than did their wives (Fanshel, 1966). Rather they more often chose to be a foster parent and to continue in that role so as to satisfy their wives or as a community service. This lack of enthusiasm for direct involvement was supported in a study by Hunter et al. (1977). "Father involvement, as rated by the mother, was not significantly related to overall satisfaction as a foster parent" (p. 11). These studies tend to indicate that the foster father's contact with the child is not a major factor related to satisfaction. However, Aldridge and Cautley's study (1975) indicated that the foster father's early involvement with the agency affected foster home satisfaction. Therefore, the literature is

somewhat conflicting as to the role the foster father plays in foster home satisfaction.

#### Personality variables

There are also studies that examine personality and attitudinal variables as they relate to foster home success or foster home satisfaction. According to Rowe (1976), "there is considerable evidence linking foster parents' attitudes with their success at fostering" (p. 506). And other researchers, such as Kinter and Otto (1964) support Krish's contention that there is a relationship between personality adjustment of foster parents and successful fostering.

Rowe (1976), believing that foster parent attitudes affect the quality of care, studied the effect of foster parents' tolerance of differences on placements. This study found that foster parents who could tolerate attitudes and behavior that conflicted with their own value system were more successful as foster parents than those who could not tolerate such attitudes and behavior. Rowe also found that foster parents who held authoritarian attitudes and who were extremely devout in their religious beliefs had difficulty in being foster parents. Rowe's study found that foster parent attitudes influenced their success as a foster home.

Gass (1972) found that couples who scored high on self-disclosure were more successful as foster parents than couples who scored low. For a foster family to be successful they need to be able to share themselves with the foster child and with the agency, and this apparently is affirmed by the need for a foster family's need for a high level of self-disclosure.

Kinter and Otto (1964) found that foster homes that were the most successful tended to have more of a child focus than a self-focus. In their study the most adequate foster parents gave child-centered rather than self-centered responses.

Murphy's study (1968) indicated that a negative attitude on the part of the foster mother toward the natural parents of the child was detrimental to foster home success. This negativism toward the natural parent is detrimental as the natural parent has a viable place in the foster care process which the foster parent should not be allowed to undermine.

Hunter et al. (1977) found that foster home satisfaction was related to difficulty in separation. "Satisfaction with foster parenting was shown to be significantly related to difficulty of separation" (p. 16). Fanshel (1966) noted that foster mothers caring for infants have the most difficulty in separation while those foster mothers caring for older children have less difficulty. However, in his study the foster mothers caring for infants have the highest level of satisfaction.

From these various studies what has really been learned about foster home success and foster home satisfaction? The studies indicate that no clear picture emerges as to the relationship between socioeconomic status and foster parenthood. The studies that attempt to relate the number of foster parents' own children to success are conflicting and confusing. Residential location does seem to make a difference with city and rural foster homes faring better than suburban homes. The employment satisfaction of the foster father seems to transfer over to his home as those who are most satisfied with their level of employment are the most satisfied



with foster parenthood. Also it was found that the employment of the mother does not negatively affect satisfaction. The studies tend to indicate a trend, although not a clear one, that older foster mothers perform better than younger ones. The length of placement of the children does not seem to affect foster home satisfaction nor did agency affiliation. The relationship of the foster mother to the social worker does make a significant difference as to the mother's satisfaction level. Likewise, the father's positive feelings and attitudes toward the agency affects his satisfaction level. The foster mother's level of satisfaction was affected by the relationship she had with the child, whereas the foster father's relationship with the child seemed somewhat less critical. Foster parents who are capable of tolerating differences; who have the ability to disclose themselves, and who are child-focused appear to be quite successful at fostering whereas foster parents who hold authoritarian attitudes, who are extremely devout in their religious faith, who are hostile toward natural parents, and who have difficulty in separation appear to fare less well in fostering.

## CHAPTER IV. METHODOLOGY

## The Questionnaire

For this research project a 58-item questionnaire was used (see Appendix C). The questionnaire includes: demographic information, a 19-item satisfaction scale, and a 16-item copyrighted instrument, Budner's Intolerance of Ambiguity scale. The questionnaire was written in two forms; one for foster homes in the program and the other for homes that had left the program. The questionnaire also was translated into Spanish by two Spanish-speaking individuals since El Paso, Texas has a large number of Spanish-speaking persons.

In developing the questionnaire Dillman's (1974) techniques were used. Some of Dillman's suggestions incorporated into the questionnaire include: booklet format, an eye-catching cover page, straightforward questions, personalization procedures, and emphasis on the social usefulness of the project. The questionnaire is a 12-page booklet that has a drawing on the cover along with a brief description of the project that emphasizes the social usefulness of the study. Personalization procedures such as individual names on cover letters and personal signing of letters were also used. The social usefulness of the project was emphasized in the cover letters, postcards, personal followups, and on the questionnaire itself.

After developing the questionnaire feedback was obtained from agency staff and a few foster parents as to its readability, difficulty, and

clarity. Some of these suggestions were incorporated into the final form of the questionnaire.

It was decided to use a questionnaire in this study and acknowledge some of the problems inherent in their use. One of the drawbacks in using a questionnaire is that there is no degree of certainty that those who failed to complete the questionnaire are similar to those who chose to complete the questionnaire. And according to Gass (1972), "a considerable proportion of foster parents have inadequate reading skills and either cannot cope with a self-report measure which they must fill out themselves, or can do it only with difficulty and find it an unpleasant experience" (p. 3).

Although there are drawbacks in using a questionnaire one real advantage to its use is anonymity. Foster parents may feel less inclined to give the socially desirable response when they are mailed a questionnaire than when an interviewer is present. For this research project the questionnaire method of data collection seemed the most expedient method considering time and financial constraints. A small grant was obtained from the Home Economics Gift Fund of Iowa State University for data collection.

#### Budner's Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale

After searching the literature for an appropriate measure for uncertainty, Budner's Intolerance of Ambiguity scale was selected because other measures were either too complicated or too short for the purpose of this study. Written permission was obtained from Duke University Press to incorporate Budner's Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale into the research study.

This measure is a 16-item scale with responses varying from strong agreement to strong disagreement (see Appendix C). To reduce the possibility of an acquiescence response set the scale is composed of an equal number of positively and negatively worded items. However, the positive and negative items are set apart in 8-item segments. This scale seeks to determine whether respondents view ambiguity as desirable or undesirable. According to Budner (1962),

An ambiguous situation may be defined as one which cannot be adequately structured or categorized by the individual because of the lack of sufficient cues. It is possible to identify three such situations: a completely new situation in which there are no familiar cues; a complex situation in which there are a great number of cues to be taken into account; and a contradictory situation in which different elements or cues suggest different structures--in short, situations characterized by novelty, complexity, or insolubility (p. 30).

Extensive reliability testing has been done with Budner's Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale. When the test-retest method was utilized on one group the coefficient of stability was found to be .85. This reliability is much higher than the reliabilities obtained utilizing the more conservative Cronbach's alpha technique. Sixteen different groups have been tested with Cronbach's alpha and with this method reliabilities have ranged from .39 to .62 (Robinson & Shaver, 1973). These reliabilities were obtained on student populations and, therefore, it was necessary to do further reliability testing on a population similar to foster parents in El Paso County, Texas before incorporating the instrument into the research study.

To pilot the instrument on a foster parent population permission was obtained from the Story County office of the Iowa Department of Social

Services. To enlist foster parent support for the piloting of the instrument two mailings were done that encouraged their participation and requested their return of the enclosed questionnaire. Thirty-six foster parents, or approximately 58% of the foster parents in Story County, completed and returned the questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha for Budner's Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale utilizing Story County foster parents was .50. A reliability of .50 was considered sufficient to incorporate the measure into the research study.

The validity of Budner's Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale has been moderately demonstrated through its correlation with other tolerance-intolerance of ambiguity measures. The instrument has modest correlations with the Princeton, Coulter, and Walk Scales (Budner, 1962; Robinson & Shaver, 1973). Budner's Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale also correlates with favorable attitudes toward censorship, conventionality, belief in divine power, and attendance at religious services. There is a modest correlation with the F scale on authoritarianism as well (Budner, 1962; Robinson and Shaver, 1973).

#### Foster Home Satisfaction Scale

An instrument to measure foster home satisfaction was needed. Fanshel's measure that examines private versus social gratifications of foster parenthood did not meet the needs of this study (Fanshel, 1961). Consequently, no existing measure on foster home satisfaction was found that would be appropriate for the study, and therefore, it was necessary to develop an instrument. A 19-item scale was developed drawing heavily

upon the literature in the field and the researcher's past experience in the area of foster care. The Lead Program Director of El Paso County Child Welfare and the supervisor for the foster care support unit also made pertinent suggestions that were incorporated into the 19-item scale.

The foster home satisfaction scale is a 19-item scale with responses varying from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. This scale seeks to determine how gratified or pleased foster parents are with: the foster child's characteristics such as the child's age and sex; the foster family's composition through knowledge of the length of stay and number of children at any one time; the relationships associated with foster care, in particular the relationship to the child and to agency personnel; agency influences such as the number of staff involved in their home, the frequency of worker contact, the agency policies and procedures, the amount of financial reimbursement, agency training of foster parents, and agency events for foster families; and the sharing of parental responsibility with the agency and natural parents.

### The Sample

The questionnaire was administered to 40 homes presently in El Paso County Child Welfare's foster home program and to 40 homes that had left El Paso County Child Welfare's program in the past four years. The homes that had exited from the program left the agency for a multitude of reasons ranging from their adoption of the foster children to the agency's closing their home. Regardless of the reason for the withdrawal from the program the home was included in the population of homes that had left the

program in the past four years. There was only one home that was deleted from the list and this was at the agency's request because the agency had been involved in several court proceedings with this home and it was not felt to be in the agency's or home's best interest to have this home complete a questionnaire.

Homes presently in the program were obtained by a listing from El Paso County Child Welfare. If a home was officially licensed by the Texas Department of Public Welfare it was included in homes presently in the foster home program. To determine the sample for withdrawals it was necessary to go through files that the agency maintained. Additional names were obtained through the foster home lists of the coordinators.

A sample of forty foster homes in the program and 40 homes that had left the program was randomly selected. The questionnaire was mailed to both husbands and wives. There was a maximum return possible of 149 questionnaires due to divorce or death of a spouse. Of the homes in the program there was a maximum return possible of 40 questionnaires from the mothers and 34 questionnaires from the fathers; for those who left the program there was a maximum return possible of 39 questionnaires from the mothers and 36 from the fathers.

An initial mailing of the questionnaire was made in September, 1977. Foster homes in the program had been informed through an agency mailing that the project was soon to begin and were encouraged to

participate. Following the initial mailing of the questionnaire was a postcard reminder one week later. In early October personal followups of those not returning questionnaires were conducted both by home visits and telephone calls. In mid-October one final mailing of the questionnaire was done (see Appendix C).

After the initial mailing some questionnaires were returned due to the lack of a forwarding address. If no forwarding address could be determined then that home was dropped from the listing and another home randomly selected as a replacement.

Of a possible 149 respondents there were 100 returns. This 67% return rate brings into question Gass' (1972) contention that the bulk of foster parents cannot cope with a self-report measure. Of the 100 respondents 60 were in the program and 40 had left the program. Three persons who had initially been in the program withdrew so these individuals were placed in the withdrawal category. Fifty-five respondents were female and 45 were male. The mean age of the respondents was 46.8 years and 72% of the respondents were high school graduates or less. Twenty-eight percent had some college education. Fifty-six percent had an income of \$12,000 or more whereas 44% had an income of less than \$12,000 with 10% of those having an income of less than \$6,000 (see Table 1). Of the respondents 94 were presently married with two divorced and four widowed.



Table 1. Total income of respondents

Total income	Number	Percentage
Less than \$6,000	9	10
\$6,000 to \$8,999	17	19
\$9,000 to \$11,999	14	15
\$12,000 to \$15,999	27	30
More than \$16,000	24	26
Total	91	100

### Statistical Procedures

For all data analysis in this study the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used at Iowa State University's Computation Center.

To obtain reliability coefficients on Budner's Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale and the Foster Home Satisfaction Scale Cronbach's alpha was used. This is a rather conservative measure for reliability. When ambiguity and satisfaction were divided into high/low categories the median was used as the dividing line between the categories.

On the El Paso data frequency counts were done on every item in the questionnaire, and the mean, median, and standard deviation were obtained. Then contingency tables for each item were analyzed to determine if significant differences existed between homes in the program and those that had left the program. Chi-square was the statistic employed for this analysis. For a difference to be reported as significant the .05 probability level was selected.

To test the hypotheses a variety of statistical techniques were employed: t-tests, analysis of variance, regression, and multiple regression.

### Hypotheses

The null hypotheses to be tested may be classified according to the variables involved. For the variable tolerance of ambiguity the following null hypotheses were tested:

1. There will be no difference in tolerance of ambiguity between foster parents in the program and foster parents that have left the program.
2. There will be no difference in tolerance of ambiguity between foster mothers in the program and foster mothers that have left the program.
3. There will be no difference in tolerance of ambiguity between foster fathers in the program and foster fathers that have left the program.
4. There will be no interaction effect on tolerance of ambiguity when the factors of sex and program status are considered.

For the variable foster home satisfaction the following null hypotheses were tested:

1. There will be no difference in foster home satisfaction between foster parents in the program and those that have left the program.
2. There will be no difference in foster home satisfaction between foster mothers in the program and those that have left the program.

3. There will be no difference in foster home satisfaction between foster fathers in the program and those that have left the program.

4. There will be no interaction effect on foster home satisfaction when the factors of sex and program status are considered.

For the variable foster home satisfaction categorized by tolerance of ambiguity the following null hypotheses were tested:

1. Regardless of program status foster parents with high tolerance of ambiguity will not differ in satisfaction level from foster parents with low tolerance of ambiguity.

2. Foster parents who left the program with low tolerance of ambiguity will not differ in satisfaction level from foster parents who left the program with high tolerance of ambiguity.

3. Foster parents in the program with low tolerance of ambiguity will not differ in satisfaction level from foster parents in the program with high tolerance of ambiguity.

To predict foster home satisfaction by tolerance of ambiguity the following hypothesis was tested:

1. A foster parent's satisfaction with the foster home program cannot be predicted by knowing his/her tolerance of ambiguity.

To predict program status by the variables tolerance of ambiguity and foster home satisfaction the following null hypothesis was tested:

1. A foster parent's program status cannot be predicted by knowing his/her tolerance of ambiguity and satisfaction with the foster home program.

## CHAPTER V. RESULTS

Computing the reliability of the two scales in the questionnaire was essential before proceeding with the analysis of the data. This would indicate what degree of confidence could be placed on the findings. Budner's Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale had undergone numerous testings of its reliability; however, only one previous test had involved a foster parent population. Before the questionnaires were mailed to the El Paso subjects a reliability test with Story County foster parents was used and the reliability was found to be .50. With 100 El Paso respondents the reliability of Budner's Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale using a Cronbach's alpha was found to be .60. The Foster Home Satisfaction Scale, unlike Budner's Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale, had had no previous reliability testing. In the El Paso data the scale was found to have a reliability of .91 using a Cronbach's alpha.

The primary hypothesis tested dealt with the effect of tolerance of ambiguity on foster home satisfaction. Additional hypotheses look at tolerance of ambiguity and satisfaction as they relate to program status and sex.

The following hypotheses look at tolerance of ambiguity, foster home satisfaction, foster home satisfaction categorized by tolerance of ambiguity, predicting foster home satisfaction by tolerance of ambiguity, and predicting program status by tolerance of ambiguity and foster home satisfaction.

## Tolerance of Ambiguity

1. There will be no difference in tolerance of ambiguity between foster parents in the program and foster parents that have left the program. To test the hypothesis a pooled t-test was employed. The t value was not significant and, therefore, the hypothesis was not rejected ( $t = .11$ ,  $df = 98$ ,  $p = .91$ ). Foster parents in the program did not appear to differ significantly in tolerance of ambiguity from foster parents that had left the program (Table 2).

Table 2. t-test of tolerance of ambiguity related to program status

Variable	Number	Means	Pooled t value	Degrees of freedom
Ambiguity scale				
In program	60	59.83	0.11	98
Withdrawn from program	40	59.58		

2. There will be no difference in tolerance of ambiguity between foster mothers in the program and foster mothers that have left the program. To test the hypothesis a pooled t-test was employed. The t value was not significant and, therefore, the hypothesis was not rejected ( $t = -.57$ ,  $df = 53$ ,  $p = .57$ ). Foster mothers that had left the program did not appear to differ significantly in tolerance of ambiguity from foster mothers in the program (Table 3).

Table 3. t-test of tolerance of ambiguity related to program status of foster mothers

Variable	Number	Means	Pooled t value	Degrees of freedom
Ambiguity scale				
In program	34	60.74	-0.57	53
Withdrawn from program	21	62.48		

3. There will be no difference in tolerance of ambiguity between foster fathers in the program and those that have left the program. A pooled t-test was used to test the hypothesis and it was found that no significant difference existed between the two groups; therefore, the hypothesis was not rejected ( $t = .68$ ,  $df = 43$ ,  $p = .498$ ) (Table 4).

Table 4. t-test of tolerance of ambiguity related to program status of foster fathers

Variable	Number	Means	Pooled t value	Degrees of freedom
Ambiguity scale				
In program	26	58.65	0.68	43
Withdrawn from program	19	56.37		

4. There will be no interaction effect on tolerance of ambiguity when the factors of sex and program status are considered. To test the hypothesis an analysis of variance was performed. The F value of .794 was

not significant; therefore, the hypothesis was not rejected. For the main effects of sex and program status there also were no significant differences (Table 5).

Table 5. Analysis of variance of tolerance of ambiguity scores by sex and program status

Source of variation	df	Mean square	F	Level of significance
Sex	1	339.52	2.80	N.S.
Program status	1	.26	.002	N.S.
Sex $\times$ program status	1	96.42	.794	N.S.
Residual	96	121.50		
Total	99	122.24		

#### Foster Home Satisfaction

1. There will be no difference in foster home satisfaction between foster parents in the program and those that have left the program. A pooled t-test was employed to determine whether a difference existed in satisfaction according to program status of foster homes. A highly significant difference was found to exist between those in the program and those that have left the program as to satisfaction level. With the satisfaction instrument a low mean indicates high satisfaction and a high mean indicates low satisfaction (see Appendix). Therefore, foster homes that left the program were less satisfied with the program than homes in the program. The hypothesis was rejected ( $t = -3.97$ ,  $df = 98$ ,  $p < .01$  (Table 6).

Table 6. t-test of satisfaction of foster parents related to program status

Variable	Number	Means	Pooled t value	Degrees of freedom
Satisfaction				
In program	60	47.92	-3.97	98
Withdrawn from program	40	67.55		

2. There will be no difference in foster home satisfaction between foster mothers in the program and those that have left the program. A pooled t-test was employed and a highly significant difference was found to exist between foster mothers in the program and those out of the program as to foster home satisfaction. Mothers that left the program were less satisfied with the program than mothers in the program. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected ( $t = -2.99$ ,  $df = 53$ ,  $p < .01$  (Table 7)).

Table 7. t-test of satisfaction of foster mothers related to program status

Variable	Number	Means	Pooled t value	Degrees of freedom
Satisfaction				
In program	34	46.91	-2.99	53
Withdrawn from program	21	65.81		



3. There will be no difference in foster home satisfaction between foster fathers in the program and those that have left the program. A pooled t-test was employed and it was found that a significant difference existed between foster fathers in the program and those out of the program as to satisfaction level. Fathers that left the program were less satisfied with the program than fathers in the program. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected ( $t = -2.55$ ,  $df = 43$ ,  $p < .01$ ) (Table 8).

Table 8. t-test of satisfaction of foster fathers related to program status

Variable	Number	Means	Pooled t value	Degrees of freedom
Satisfaction				
In program	26	49.23	-2.55	43
Withdrawn from program	19	69.47		

4. There will be no interaction effect on foster home satisfaction when the factors of sex and program status are considered. To test the hypothesis an analysis of variance was performed. There was no significant interaction; therefore, the hypothesis was not rejected. The results indicated that program status affects foster home satisfaction but sex does not. In this study foster mothers in the program were the most satisfied and foster fathers that had left the program were the most dissatisfied (Table 9).

Table 9. Analysis of variance of satisfaction scores by sex and program status

Source of variation	df	Mean square	F	Level of significance
Sex	1	202.40	.339	N.S.
Program status	1	9123.80	15.298**	.01
Sex $\times$ program status	1	10.76	.018	N.S.
Residual	96	596.41		
Total	99	673.93		

Means of satisfaction scores by sex and program status

Sex and program status	N	Means	Means
Mothers in program	34	46.9	47.89
Fathers in program	26	49.2	
Mothers out of program	21	65.8	67.56
Fathers out of program	19	69.5	

## Foster Home Satisfaction Categorized by Tolerance of Ambiguity

1. Regardless of program status foster parents with high tolerance of ambiguity will not differ in satisfaction level from foster parents with low tolerance of ambiguity. A pooled t-test was employed to determine if tolerance of ambiguity affects foster home satisfaction. The t value was not significant, and therefore, the hypothesis was not rejected ( $t = -.88$ ,  $df = 98$ ,  $p = .379$ ) (Table 10). In this study tolerance of ambiguity did not affect foster home satisfaction.

2. Foster parents who left the program with low tolerance of ambiguity will not differ in satisfaction level from foster parents who left

Table 10. t-test of satisfaction of foster parents related to tolerance of ambiguity

Variable	Number	Means	Pooled t value	Degrees of freedom
Satisfaction				
High tolerance of ambiguity	54	57.89	-0.88	98
Low tolerance of ambiguity	46	53.28		

the program with high tolerance of ambiguity. A pooled t-test was employed to test this hypothesis. The t value was not significant, and therefore, the hypothesis was not rejected ( $t = .09$ ,  $df = 38$ ,  $p = .93$ ) (Table 11). The tolerance of ambiguity of foster parents who left the program did not affect their satisfaction level.

Table 11. t-test of satisfaction of former foster parents related to tolerance of ambiguity

Variable	Number	Means	Pooled t value	Degrees of freedom
Satisfaction				
High tolerance of ambiguity	23	67.26	.09	38
Low tolerance of ambiguity	17	67.94		

3. Foster parents in the program with low tolerance of ambiguity will not differ in satisfaction level from foster parents in the program

with high tolerance of ambiguity. A pooled t-test was used to test this hypothesis. For foster parents in the program tolerance of ambiguity did not affect foster home satisfaction; therefore, the hypothesis was not rejected ( $t = -.99$ ,  $df = 58$ ,  $p = .329$ ) (Table 12).

Table 12. t-test of satisfaction of present foster parents related to tolerance of ambiguity

Variable	Number	Means	Pooled t value	Degrees of freedom
Satisfaction				
High tolerance of ambiguity	31	50.94	-.99	58
Low tolerance of ambiguity	29	44.69		

#### Prediction of Foster Home Satisfaction by Tolerance of Ambiguity

1. A foster parent's satisfaction with the foster home program cannot be predicted by knowing his/her tolerance of ambiguity. To test this hypothesis the technique of regression was used. The F value of .78 was not significant; the beta correlation coefficient was .088. The R square value was .008. This means that less than 1% of a foster parent's satisfaction with the program can be predicted by knowing the tolerance of ambiguity of a foster parent. Therefore, the hypothesis was not rejected (Table 13).

Table 13. Regression satisfaction score by tolerance of ambiguity

Source of variation	df	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Level of significance
Regression	1	527.05	527.05		
Residual	98	66192.66	675.44	0.78	N.S.
Simple correlation				0.0888	
Square of the correlation				0.0079	

Prediction of Program Status by Tolerance of Ambiguity  
and Foster Home Satisfaction

1. A foster parent's program status cannot be predicted by knowing his/her tolerance of ambiguity and satisfaction with the foster home program. To test this hypothesis the technique of multiple regression was used. Satisfaction was entered into the equation first because it correlated the highest with the dependent variable. The  $F$  value was significant at 11.70. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected (Table 14). Tolerance of ambiguity was then entered into the equation and the  $F$  value dropped to 5.81 which also was significant. However, it is clear that the satisfaction variable is carrying the tolerance of ambiguity variable in the equation. When the variables were examined separately the  $F$  value for the satisfaction variable 11.27 which is significant and the  $F$  value for the tolerance of ambiguity variable was .036 which was not significant. The multiple  $R$  for the satisfaction variable is .326 and the  $R$  square is .11. Adding the tolerance of ambiguity variable the multiple  $R$  value is .327 and the  $R$  square is .11. Therefore, it is evident that having the

Table 14. Regression on program status by satisfaction

Source of variation	df	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F
Regression	1	2.56	2.56	
Residual	98	21.44	.22	11.70*
Multiple correlation				.3266
Square of the multiple correlation				.1067
Variable	B		Beta	F
Satscale	.320		.327	11.70*
Constant	.920			
Program status = .32 (satisfaction scale) +.92				

tolerance of ambiguity variable in the equation has little additional effect. Therefore, in the prediction equation only the satisfaction variable should be employed. The prediction equation using only the satisfaction variable is: Program status = .32 (satisfaction scale) +.92. The foster home program status is equal to .32 times the composite satisfaction score plus .92. The hypothesis was rejected because program status can be predicted by knowing a foster parent's tolerance of ambiguity and satisfaction. However, satisfaction remains the key variable to aid prediction and does so by 11 percent (Table 15).

Table 15. Multiple regression on program status by tolerance of ambiguity and satisfaction

Source of variation	df	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F
Regression	2	2.568	1.284	
Residual	97	21.432	0.221	5.81*
Multiple correlation				0.3271
Square of the multiple correlation				0.1070

## CHAPTER VI. DISCUSSION

## Results

This study was primarily undertaken to determine if tolerance of ambiguity affects foster home satisfaction. The results indicated that the data do not support the proposition. Also, included in the study were several hypotheses that dealt with foster home satisfaction and program status. In this chapter these results will also be discussed. This section will also include a discussion of the limitations of the present study, recommendations for further research, and implications for policy.

Tolerance of ambiguity

In each of the hypotheses that involved the variable tolerance of ambiguity it was found that tolerance of ambiguity was not an influencing variable: There was no difference between homes in the program and those that left as to their tolerance of ambiguity, tolerance of ambiguity did not affect foster home satisfaction, and knowing a foster parent's tolerance of ambiguity did not aid in prediction of program status.

Since a great deal of uncertainty exists throughout the foster care system it appears that tolerance of ambiguity would be a factor that influences foster home satisfaction. Studies by Rowe (1976) indicated that foster homes that tolerated differences in values and behavior were more successful than homes that did not tolerate differences well. Also, authoritarian attitudes correlated negatively with success at fostering. As Budner's Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale has a modest correlation with the F scale on authoritarianism it is unknown why the results of this



study did not support the earlier study that correlates foster home failure with authoritarianism. One possible explanation is the measure itself. Budner's Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale has a modest reliability. However, it may be limited in its ability to measure the concept tolerance of ambiguity for a foster parent population. The measure encourages an acquiescence response set because the scale places eight positive items and then eight negative items in order. With foster parents primarily coming from the lower educational levels the questions may be more apt to be answered from the acquiescence response set. Also, Budner's Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale has modest validity. The concerns of this researcher related to validity include: the lack of face validity of the items for a foster parent population and the appropriateness of one item (number 9) for use in this particular study since El Paso, Texas borders a foreign country (see Appendix C). This then would limit the interpretation of the results. Another possibility to consider is that the concept tolerance of ambiguity really is not a factor that influences foster home satisfaction. Foster parents may have little difficulty dealing with the uncertainties inherent in the situation but rather take them as a matter of course.

#### Foster home satisfaction

It was found that in this study foster home satisfaction affects program status and knowing the satisfaction level of the foster home aids in the prediction of program status. Foster parents who left the program were less satisfied with the program than those who are presently in the program. It was found that foster mothers in the program were the most

satisfied among the foster parent groups and foster fathers who left the program were the most dissatisfied. It is quite understandable that parents in the program have a higher level of satisfaction than those who have left for people tend to continue in experiences which are meaningful and gratifying. That the foster fathers who left the program had the highest level of dissatisfaction may indicate that foster fathers may play more of a role in the foster family system than has thus far been acknowledged. This is particularly true since foster parents who left the program indicated that the relationship of the child to spouse was less satisfactory than foster parents in the program indicated. This brings into question Simonds' (1973) statement that the relationship of the child to the foster mother is the key relationship and Hunter et al.'s (1977) contention that father involvement is not important to foster home satisfaction.

Knowing the level of foster home satisfaction aids in the prediction of program status by accounting for approximately 11% of the variance. However, the scale can only be used to determine satisfaction level of homes in the program or those that left as the items require exposure to the program. Therefore, the scale cannot be used in recruitment efforts. The scale can however assist in determining areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of homes in the program. By knowing this efforts can be made to improve the program. Also, knowing the satisfaction level of homes can help one know if that home is more likely to remain in the program or exit from it.

### Results related to placement and pre-placement

Although tolerance of ambiguity was not found to be a variable that influences foster home satisfaction there were many results in this study that supported the contention that ambiguity exists within the foster home system. Such results as the use of pre-placement visits, the amount of followup information given to foster parents, and the certainty as to placement length and outcome support this contention.

Pre-placement visits serve the function of allowing a family and child to become acquainted with one another and establish a degree-of-fit before the child comes to live within the family. Pre-placement visits may reduce the ambiguity by allowing the foster family to become acquainted with entrants into the system on a more gradual basis than when pre-placements are not utilized. In this study it was found that pre-placement visits were used much less frequently in the homes that left the program than homes presently in the program (see Table 16 in the Appendix). This finding is important not only because Aldridge and Cautley (1975) found that children that had pre-placements fared better in foster care than those children who did not have pre-placement visits but also it is felt that without a pre-placement visit there is apt to be more stress placed on the foster family system as they are asked to cope with more unknowns.

Foster parents that have left the program not only received less information on foster children before their arrival but also received less followup information on children after their departure. By not receiving followup information the family may be asked to cope with more separation

anxiety and is less able to gently close the family circle; rather the termination is much more abrupt and final at the child's time of departure (see Table 17 in Appendix A).

There was no significant difference between foster parents in the program and those that had left as to their certainty of placement length. This study indicated that there is a high level of ambiguity regarding the length of placement regardless of program status, and therefore, supports the existing literature regarding ambiguity in relation to placement length (Dinnage & Pringle, 1967; Kline & Overstreet, 1972; Wilkes, 1974) (see Table 18 in Appendix A).

Almost 70% of the foster parents in the program indicated that they never knew what the placement outcome would be whereas only 30% of those that left the program responded that they never knew what the outcome would be. With 70% of those in the program responding as they did support is given to Lawder's (1974) statement that there is considerable ambiguity in outcome decisions (see Table 19 in Appendix A).

Temporariness of the foster family system was also found to exist. Thirty-four percent of the homes were involved in the program for less than a year; thirty percent of those that withdrew were in the program less than a year indicating that new foster homes are homes at risk. Many researchers have reported on the stress involved with early and first year placements and this study would support their findings that it is stressful and would even indicate that the stress might lead to breakdown of foster homes (George, 1970; Kay, 1971a; Levine, 1972; Radinsky, 1970). Of the homes presently in the program 36.6% are homes in their first year of

operation. These homes it would seem are vulnerable and could benefit from support services if they too are not to exit from the program (see Table 20 in Appendix A).

The average length of stay of a child in foster care also supports the concept of temporariness. The average length of stay was: 26% stayed for 3 months or less, 69% stayed for one year or less, and 31% stayed one year or more. That 69% stayed for one year or less supports Fanshel's (1971) study which indicated that a major exodus of children occurred during their first year of placement. It does not support Maas' (1969), Rothschild's (1974), or Claburn et al.'s (1976) studies which indicated most placements lasted several years in duration (see Table 21 in Appendix A).

#### Limitations of the Present Study

Some of the limitations of this study include: the measures employed, the pairing effect of husbands and wives, the use of a single agency's foster homes, and the effect of history and change.

The primary measures for this study were: Budner's Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale and the Foster Home Satisfaction Scale. The Foster Home Satisfaction Scale had not undergone previous testing with other foster parent groups; therefore, the only known reliability is the one obtained from this study. However it was .91. With Budner's Intolerance of Ambiguity the reliability is a rather modest .51 so it is debatable as to whether or not the scale adequately measures the concept.

Another limitation of this study is that the pairing effect may be in operation as foster fathers and mothers were both asked to complete the questionnaire. Nonetheless, it was felt that the participation of the fathers was important enough to proceed with the questionnaires administered to both parents even if the pairing effect would occur.

All the foster parents in this research study were from a single public agency in the southwestern region of the United States. The results and interpretations are, therefore, limited in scope. It is quite possible that foster parents in private agencies or in different public agencies would respond differently as might foster parents in different geographical and cultural regions.

Another limitation of this study is that in the past four years the agency's policies, procedures, and personnel have undergone marked changes. This means that foster parents that have withdrawn from the program are responding to their satisfaction to a program that may be very different from the present one.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

It is suggested that the variable tolerance of ambiguity be studied further using different foster parent populations to assist in determining if the variable's lack of significance was a factor of this particular study. Additional studies could be done utilizing foster parents in urban and rural settings from different geographical regions and from both public and private agencies. Also a different measure for ambiguity might

be employed. It would also be suggested that to reduce the effects of program changes the sample of homes that left the program might encompass a shorter period of time since their withdrawal from the program.

Extensive research needs to be done regarding satisfaction and foster homes. A particularly fruitful area of inquiry might be a more complete study of how foster parent perceptions of their spouses' relationship to a child affects foster home satisfaction. Another area for further study would be the effect of length of stay on foster home satisfaction. Although the foster homes both in and out of the program reported no significant difference as to their satisfaction with the length of stay and Hunter et al.'s (1977) study also indicated the same it, nevertheless, was found that homes that left the program had children for shorter periods of time. More work needs to be done to determine if there is correlation.

Further investigation also needs to be done to determine which agency policies and procedures foster parents are most satisfied with and most dissatisfied with--a more extensive breakdown is called for in this area.

Another useful study that could be done is to relate foster parent satisfaction with worker ratings as to foster home effectiveness.

#### Implications for Policy

A foster parent's tolerance of ambiguity was not found to be a factor related to foster home satisfaction. Therefore, tolerance of ambiguity cannot serve as a predictive tool to aid in the placement process, either in the matching of foster children to foster parents or in the selection

and recruitment of foster parents. Although tolerance of ambiguity was not found to relate to foster home satisfaction, the study, nevertheless, has many useful findings.

Because the Foster Home Satisfaction Scale can only aid prediction by 11% it has little practical significance at this time but does have statistical significance. However, it was important to learn that foster parents who left the program were significantly less satisfied than foster parents presently in the program even if one cannot predict by more than 11% which foster homes presently in the program are likely to leave the program due to dissatisfaction. Also it was important to learn specific areas of dissatisfaction.

This study indicated that foster homes in their first year of operation are foster homes at risk. If the agency hopes to maintain these homes in their foster home program there is a need for additional support for these foster homes.

Foster parents who left the foster home program were less satisfied with their relationship to agency staff and the frequency of worker contact than were foster parents presently in the foster home program. The agency might benefit by encouraging increased contact of foster homes by agency staff and also might benefit by educating workers as to the nature of the social worker-foster parent relationship, and, thereby, attempt to improve the quality of the relationship. What the agency expends in increased worker time for contacts and support services may well be a gain by subsequently reducing foster home breakdown and placement breakdown. Also the more an agency is able to maintain and support the foster homes



they have the less energy they need to expend on recruitment. Therefore, it seems advisable that more efforts be directed toward providing support to existing foster homes.

The satisfaction items indicated foster parents who left the foster home program were less satisfied with agency policies and procedures than foster homes presently in the program (and homes in the program were none too satisfied). It would be beneficial for the agency to learn more about which specific policies and procedures are objectionable to the foster homes. After obtaining this information the agency could then proceed either to make changes in policies and procedures or work more diligently to educate foster parents as to the reasons for such policies and procedures.

The foster parent training program was also a source of dissatisfaction for foster parents who left the program. A reassessment of the training program could be beneficial, as a training program can be a major source of support for foster parents.

Foster parents who left the foster home program indicated that the relationship of the foster child to their spouse was less satisfactory than foster parents presently in the foster home program indicated. When foster parents indicate that a spouse is having relationship difficulties with a foster child this appears to be a warning sign that additional support services are needed.

This study indicated that the agency was utilizing the two-parent family also exclusively for their foster home program. The agency might want to consider nontraditional alternatives for their infant or adoles-

cent homes if recruitment of the traditional two-parent family proves difficult.

This study also indicated that considerable ambiguity remains particularly as to the outcome and length of stay of children in placement. As case plans are employed for each child much of this ambiguity should be reduced. It is important that as the case plans are assessed and reassessed that foster parents remain informed as to the plans for the children placed within their home.

Throughout the study basically foster parents had a high degree of satisfaction with the foster home program. The foster parents were quite pleased with the children that they received into their homes. Areas of improvement in the foster home program primarily are needed in the foster parent training program, policies and procedures, and the relationship and frequency of contact between agency staff and foster parents.

## CHAPTER VII. SUMMARY

The primary focus of this study was to determine whether tolerance of ambiguity affects foster home satisfaction. For the purposes of this study tolerance of ambiguity was defined as the ability to cope with uncertainty. The term "foster home satisfaction" indicated how pleased or gratified parents were with the foster home program and takes into account many aspects of the program--relationships, policies, and the children themselves.

Much uncertainty permeates the entire foster care system. Some of the factors that add to the uncertainty include: role confusion, rapid turnover of agency staff, diverse agency policies and procedures, inadequate case planning, high placement breakdown, uncertainty in the legal/judicial realm, the often unknown outcome of placement, the often unknown length of placement, and the community's lack of understanding as to the nature of foster care. Foster families must deal not only with these concerns but also must cope with the openness of their system which leads to unclear family boundaries and vague system identity.

For this study a 58-item questionnaire was used that included: demographic information, a 19-item satisfaction scale, and a 16-item intolerance of ambiguity scale. The 19-item satisfaction scale, the Foster Home Satisfaction Scale, examines many aspects of the foster home program and has a reliability of .91. To measure intolerance of ambiguity Budner's Intolerance of Ambiguity scale was employed having reliabilities that varied from .39 to .62 using a Cronbach's alpha in past studies.

The questionnaire was mailed to 40 homes in El Paso County Child Welfare's foster home program and to 40 homes that had withdrawn from the program during the past four years. The study had a return rate of 67%.

To test the various hypotheses a variety of statistical techniques were employed: t-tests, analysis of variance, regression, and multiple regression.

Throughout the entire study it was found that the variable tolerance of ambiguity was not a factor related to program status of homes, sex of foster parents, or satisfaction level, nor did it in any way aid prediction. However, the satisfaction variable was a variable that differentiated program status of homes and could serve as an aid in prediction. This study found that homes that left the program were less satisfied than homes presently in the program with foster mothers in the program the most satisfied and foster fathers that had left the program being the most dissatisfied. The satisfaction variable also helped aid prediction of program status of homes by 11%.

## REFERENCES

- Adams, M. Foster care for mentally retarded children: How does child welfare meet this challenge? Child Welfare, 1970, 49(5), 260-269.
- Aldridge, M., & Cautley, P. The importance of worker availability in the functioning of new foster homes. Child Welfare, 1975, 54(6), 444-453.
- Ambinder, W. The extent of successful placements among boys in foster family homes. Child Welfare, 1965, 44(7), 397-398.
- Babcock, C. Some psychodynamic factors in foster parenthood - Part I. Child Welfare, 1965, 44(0), 485-493. (a)
- Babcock, C. Some psychodynamic factors in foster parenthood - Part II. Child Welfare, 1965, 44(10), 570-577+. (b)
- Banathy, B. Developing a systems view of education: The systems model approach. Belmont, Ca.: Lear Siegler, Inc., 1973.
- Bennis, W., & Slater, P. The temporary society. New York: Harper and Row, 1968.
- Bryce, M., & Ehlert, R. 144 foster children. Child Welfare, 1971, 50(9), 499-503.
- Budner, S. Intolerance of ambiguity as a personality variable. Journal of Personality, 1962, 30(1), 29-50.
- Cautley, P., & Aldridge, M. Predicting success for new foster parents. Social Work, 1975, 20(1), 48-53.
- Child Welfare League of America. Standards for foster family service. New York: Child Welfare League of America, Inc., 1975.
- Claburn, W., Magura, S., & Resnick, W. Periodic review of foster care: A brief national assessment. Child Welfare, 1976, 55(6), 395-405.
- Close, K. An encounter with foster parents. Children, 1971, 18(4), 138-142.
- Daniels, R., & Brown, J. Foster parents and the agency. Children Today, 1973, 2(3), 25-27.
- Davids, L. Foster fatherhood: The untapped resource. Child Welfare, 1973, 52(2), 100-108.

- DeBruyn Advertising Agency. Child welfare department foster home program. Unpublished results of the El Paso survey, El Paso, Texas, October, 1977.
- Dillman, D., Carpenter, E., Christensen, J. A., & Brooks, R. Increasing mail questionnaire response: A four state comparison. American Sociological Review, 1974, 39(5), 744-756.
- Dinnage, R., & Pringle, M. Foster home care: Facts and fallacies. London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1967.
- Fanshel, D. Toward more understanding of foster parents. Doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1960.
- Fanshel, D. Specialization within the foster parent role - Part I: Differences between the foster parents of infants and foster parents of older children. Child Welfare, 1961, 40(3), 17-21.
- Fanshel, D. Foster parenthood: A role analysis. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966.
- Fanshel, D. The role of foster parents in the future of foster care. In H. D. Stone (Ed.), Foster care in question: A national reassessment by twenty-one experts. New York: Child Welfare League of America, Inc., 1970.
- Fanshel, D. The exit of children from foster care: An interim research report. Child Welfare, 1971, 50(2), 65-81.
- Festinger, T. The New York court review of children in foster care. Child Welfare, 1975, 54(4), 211-245.
- Gabrovic, A. Participation of active foster parents in the study of new applicants. Child Welfare, 1969, 48(6), 357-361.
- Galaway, B. Clarifying the role of foster parents. Children, 1972, 1(4), 32-33.
- Gass, Mary Pat. Foster parents: An attempt to describe foster parents with respect to their adequacy and to discriminate between foster and non-foster parents. Doctoral dissertation, Purdue University, 1972.
- Gedanken, M. Foster parent and social worker roles based on dynamics of foster parenting. Child Welfare, 1966, 45(9), 512-517.
- Geiser, R. The illusion of caring. Boston: Beacon Press, 1973.
- George, V. Foster care: Theory and practice. London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1970.

- Glassberg, E. Are foster homes hard to find? Child Welfare, 1965, 44(8), 453-460.
- Goldstein, J., Freud, A., & Solnit, A. Beyond the best interests of the child. New York: The Free Press, 1973.
- Handel, G. Psychological study of whole families. In G. Handel (Ed.), The psychosocial interior of the family. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1967.
- Herstein, N. The replacement of children in foster homes. Child Welfare, 1957, 36(7), 21-25.
- Hikel, V. Fostering the troubled child. In On fostering. New York: Child Welfare League of America, Inc., 1973.
- Hill, R. Modern systems theory and the family: A confrontation. Social Science Information, 1971, 10(5), 7-26.
- Hunter, L. Foster homes for teenagers. Children, 1964, 11(6), 234+.
- Hunter, L., Kelsey, L., & McCabe, P. The unsung art of fostering. Unpublished manuscript, 1977. (Available from the Department of Human Development and Family Relations, University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut).
- Jenkins, S. Duration of foster care: Some relevant antecedent variables. Child Welfare, 1967, 46(8), 450-455.
- Jenkins, S., & Norman, E. Filial deprivation and foster care. New York: Columbia University Press, 1972.
- Jones, E. A study of those who cease to foster. British Journal of Social Work, 1975, 5(1), 31-41.
- Jones, M., Neuman, R., & Syne, A. A second chance for families: Evaluation of a program to reduce foster care. New York: Child Welfare League of America, Inc., 1976.
- Kadushin, A. Adopting older children. New York: Columbia University Press, 1970.
- Kantor, D., & Lehr, W. Inside the family. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1975.
- Katz, S. The changing legal status of foster parents. Children Today, 1976, 5(6), 11-13.
- Kay, N. Foster parents as resources. In R. Tod (Ed.), Social work in foster care. London: Longman Group Ltd., 1971. (a)

- Kay, N. A systematic approach to selecting foster parents. In R. Tod (Ed.), Social work in foster care. London: Longman Group Ltd., 1971.  
(b)
- Kennedy, R. A foster parent looks at foster care. In On fostering. New York: Child Welfare League of America, Inc., 1973.
- Kinter, R., & Otto, H. The family strength concept and foster family selection. Child Welfare, 1964, 43(7), 359-364.
- Kline, D., & Overstreet, H. Foster care of children: Nurture and treatment. New York: Columbia University Press, 1972.
- Kraus, J. Predicting success of foster placements for school-age children. Social Work, 1971, 16(1), 63-72.
- Lawder, E. Toward a more scientific understanding of foster family care. Child Welfare, 1964, 43(2), 57-63.
- Lawder, E., Andrews, R., & Parsons, J. Five models of foster family group homes. New York: Child Welfare League of America, Inc., 1974.
- Levine, A. Substitute child care: Recent research and its implications. Welfare in Review, 1972, 10(1), 1-7.
- Maas, H. Children in long-term foster care. Child Welfare, 1969, 48(6), 321-333+.
- Madison, B., & Schapiro, M. Permanent and long-term foster family care as a planned service. Child Welfare, 1970, 49(3), 131-136.
- Maluccio, A. Selecting foster parents for disturbed children. Children, 1966, 13(2), 69-74.
- Mandell, B. Where are the children? A class analysis of foster care and adoption. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1973.
- McCoy, J. The motives and conflicts of foster parenthood. Children, 1962, 9(6), 222-226.
- Miller, S., Nunnally, E., & Wackman, D. Minnesota Couples Communication Program (MCCP): Premarital and marital groups. In D. H. L. Olson (Ed.), Treating relationships. Lake Mills, Iowa: Graphic Publishing Co., 1976.
- Monane, J. A sociology of human systems. New York: Meredith Publishing Co., 1967.
- Murphy, H. B. M. Predicting duration of foster care. Child Welfare, 1968, 47(2), 76-84+.



- Nie, N., Hull, C., Jenkins, J., Steinbrenner, K., & Bent, D. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1970.
- Parker, R. Decision in child care. London: George Allen & Univen, 1966.
- Petersen, J., & Pierce, A. Socioeconomic characteristics of foster parents. Child Welfare, 1974, 53(5), 295-304.
- Radinsky, E. Provisions for care: Foster family care. In H. D. Stone (Ed.), Foster care in question: A national reassessment by twenty-one experts. New York: Child Welfare League of America, Inc., 1970.
- Reistroffer, M. A university extension course for foster parents. Children, 1968, 15(1),
- Reistroffer, M. Participation of foster parents in decision-making: The concept of collegiality. Child Welfare, 1972, 51(1), 25-29.
- Robinson, J., & Shaver, P. Measures of social psychological attitudes. Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, 1973.
- Rose, J. Re-evaluation of the concept of separation for child welfare. Child Welfare, 1962, 41(10), 44-458.
- Rosenblatt, A., & Mayer, J. Reduction of uncertainty in child placement decisions. Social Work, 1970, 15(4), 52-59.
- Rothschild, A. An agency evaluates its foster home services. Child Welfare, 1974, 53(1), 42-50.
- Rowe, D. Attitudes, social class, and the quality of foster care. Social Service Review, 1976, 50(3), 506-514.
- Rowlands, P. Children apart. New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1973.
- Shah, C. Assessing needs and board rates for handicapped children in foster family care. Child Welfare, 1971, 50(10), 588-592.
- Shapiro, D. Agency investment in foster care: A study. Social Work, 1972, 17(4), 20-28.
- Shapiro, D. Agency investment in foster care: A followup. Social Work, 1973, 18(6), 3-9.
- Simonds, J. A foster home for crisis placements. Child Welfare, 1973, 52(2), 82-90/
- Speer, D. Family systems: Morphostasis and morphogenesis, or is homeostasis enough? Family Process, 1970, 9(3), 259-278.

State of Texas. Minimum standards for child-placing agencies. State Department of Public Welfare, 1976.

Sztompka, P. System and function: Toward a theory of society. New York: Academic Press, 1974.

Thomas, C. The resolution of object loss following foster home placements. Smith College Studies in Social Work, 1967, 37(3), 163-234.

Tod, R. (Ed.). Social work in foster care. London: Longman Group Ltd., 1971.

Toffler, A. Future shock. Toronto: Bantam Books, Inc., 1970.

Trasler, G. In place of parents. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960.

Watson, K., & Boverman, H. Pre-adolescent foster children in group discussions. In R. Tod (Ed.), Social work in foster care. London: Longman Group Ltd., 1971.

Weinbach, R., Edwards, M., & Levy, R. Innovations in group services to foster parents: A survey of agencies. Children Today, 1977, 6(1), 18-20.

Wilkes, J. The impact of fostering on the foster family. Child Welfare, 1974, 53(6), 373-379.

Wires, E. Some factors in the worker-foster parent relationship. In R. Tod (Ed.), Social work in foster care. London: Longman Group Limited, 1971.

Wolins, Martin. Selection of foster parents: Early stages in the development of a screen. Doctoral dissertation, Columbia University Press, 1959.

Young, L. Placement from the child's viewpoint. Social Casework, 1950, 31(6), 250-255.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of a great many persons to whom I am deeply indebted. I am foremost grateful to my parents and family for their continual and ongoing emotional and financial support throughout my graduate education.

I would also like to express my appreciation to my graduate committee who guided my program of study and dissertation through the past several years. I would like to offer a special note of gratitude to Dr. Mary Heltsley and Dr. Anton Netusil, my major professors. I also appreciated the participation and involvement of my additional committee members: Dr. Ruth Deacon, Dr. J. Stanley Ahmann, Dr. Ray Bryan, and Dr. John Strong.

This study was done with the cooperation of two agencies: the Story County office of Iowa Department of Social Services in Ames, Iowa, and El Paso County Child Welfare, Texas Department of Human Resources in El Paso, Texas. A special thanks is extended to the directors of these two agencies, Mrs. Sandra Taylor and Mr. Sam Nunez. Without their allowing me access to foster parents in their respective programs this study would not have been possible. I also am grateful to the foster parents themselves who were willing to expend the time and energy on this research project. The cooperation of agency staff was also appreciated for their endorsement of the project was a continual source of encouragement.

I would also like to thank the College of Home Economics for the financial assistance that I received for data collection from the Home Economics Gift Fund. This grant helped assist me with printing, mailing

and transportation expenses. I also would like to thank Iowa State University for the assistance of their computer fund for graduate students.

Not without mention should be my fellow graduate students who brightened my days at Iowa State University both by their concrete suggestions and invaluable support. A special thanks goes to Miss Helen Lu, Mrs. Dixie Jackson, Mrs. Judy Morris, Mrs. Virginia Sheffield, and Mrs. Coni Dagitz.

In conclusion I would like to express my gratitude to Divine Providence who has guided this phase of my life and brought my graduate education to its successful completion.

## APPENDIX A: TABLES

Table 16. Comparison of use of pre-placement visits categorized by program status

Use of pre-placement visits	Program status			
	In program		Withdrawn from program	
	N	%	N	%
Never	5	8.6	16	44.4
Sometimes	24	41.4	11	30.6
Often	4	6.9	2	5.6
Usually	10	17.2	2	5.6
Always	15	25.9	5	13.9
Total	58	61.7	36	38.3
Chi square = 17.39 with 4 df; significance = .01				

Table 17. Comparison of followup information categorized by program status

Followup information	Program status			
	In program		Withdrawn from program	
	N	%	N	%
Never	12	23.1	13	36.1
Sometimes	21	40.4	15	41.7
Often	6	11.5	7	19.4
Usually	4	7.7	1	2.8
Always	9	17.3	0	0.0
Total	52	59.1	36	40.9
Chi square = 9.32 with 4 df; significance = .05.				

Table 18. Comparison of certainty of placement length categorized by program status

Certainty of placement length	Program status			
	In program		Withdrawn from program	
	N	%	N	%
Never	41	70.7	17	45.9
Sometimes	13	22.4	13	35.1
Often	1	1.7	3	8.1
Usually	3	5.2	3	8.1
Always	0	0.0	1	2.7
Total	58	61.1	37	38.9

Chi square = 7.66 with 4 df; significance = .10

Table 19. Comparison of certainty of placement outcome categorized by program status

Certainty of placement outcome	Program status			
	In program		Withdrawn from program	
	N	%	N	%
Never	41	69.5	11	29.7
Sometimes	10	16.9	9	24.3
Often	0	0.0	5	13.5
Usually	5	8.5	5	13.5
Always	3	5.1	7	18.9
Total	59	61.5	37	38.5

Chi square = 19.97 with 4 df; significance = .01

Table 20. Comparison of length of time as foster parent categorized by program status

Length of time	Program status			
	In program		Withdrawn from program	
	N	%	N	%
Less than 6 months	8	13.3	7	17.5
6 months to 1 year	14	23.3	5	12.5
1 to 3 years	13	21.7	13	32.5
More than 3 years	25	41.7	13	32.5
Total	60	60.0	40	40.0

Chi square = 4.44 with 3 df; significance = .22

Table 21. Comparison of average length of stay of foster children categorized by foster parents' program status

Average length of stay	Program status			
	In program		Withdrawn from program	
	N	%	N	%
Less than a month	1	1.7	4	10.0
1 to 3 months	11	18.3	10	25.0
3 to 6 months	12	20.0	11	27.5
6 months to 1 year	10	16.7	10	25.0
More than a year	26	43.3	5	12.5
Total	60	60.0	40	40.0

Chi square = 12.62 with 4 df; significance = .01



APPENDIX B: LETTERS

## STATE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

P.O. Box 10276

El Paso, Texas 79994

RAYMOND W. VOWELL  
Commissioner

## BOARD MEMBERS

JAMIE H. CLEMENTS  
Chairman, TempleHILMAR G. MOORE  
RichmondRAUL JIMENEZ  
San Antonio

Our agency in cooperation with Iowa State University is attempting to learn more about foster homes. The study will involve both foster homes that are presently licensed by El Paso County Child Welfare and foster homes that are no longer in the foster home program. From this study we hope to learn from the foster parents themselves what they felt were the major strengths and weaknesses of the program. Our hope is that through this study we can develop a more viable foster home program for El Paso County.

We would appreciate your cooperation in this research study although whether or not you choose to participate remains your individual decision. I would especially urge the foster homes that have left the program to complete the questionnaire as we need your input as to what you were most dissatisfied with. Your contribution is important and the results will be more meaningful for your having taken the time to complete the questionnaire.

Your information will be kept in the strictest of confidence and we will not know of individual responses in the survey. We will be emphasizing overall data indicating trends and problems within the program in order to improve it.

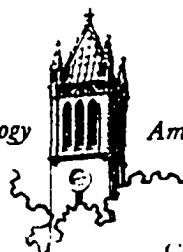
The agency does support this study and hopes that you will do the same.

Sincerely,

Samuel Nuñez  
Lead Child Welfare Program Director

SN:gc

Iowa State University of Science and Technology



Ames, Iowa 50010

College of Home Economics  
Department of Family Environment  
MacKay Hall  
Telephone 515-294-6316

Dear Mr. and Mrs.

I am a graduate student in Family Environment and Education at Iowa State University. Before coming to Iowa State University I was employed as a foster home coordinator in El Paso, Texas and as a foster home development worker in Dallas, Texas. This work experience has lead me to want to study foster homes for my PhD research.

In this study I want to look at foster home satisfaction. Many research studies in the past have focused on the foster child whereas very few studies examine the foster home itself. Although I don't minimize the importance of the studies done that focus on the foster child I feel that it is important that we learn more about the foster parents themselves - and from the foster parents point of view.

For my study to be meaningful I need your cooperation. Your participation is important for the study's success. I do hope that you will take the time to complete the questionnaire in its entirety. However if you feel uncomfortable with any item or the overall questionnaire you need not complete it. I do, however, hope that you will complete the questionnaire. Without foster parents responding to the study little can be learned.

I have provided a stamped self-addressed envelope for your return of the questionnaire. All information is confidential. The numbers that I have written on the front cover are necessary so that I can match the husband's and wife's responses when I do the statistical analysis of the data. I would like to assure you that no individual identification is desired. No names or other identifying information will be used in research reports or publishes results of the study.

Your help is essential to the success of the study. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

*Kathleen P. Sampson*  
Kathleen P. Sampson  
Doctoral Student

*Mary E. Heltsley*  
Dr. Mary E. Heltsley  
Professor, Family Environment

Dear Foster Parent:

About a week ago you received in the mail a questionnaire from the Foster Family Research Project. If you have already completed and returned the questionnaire I would like to thank you for your participation in the study. If you have not yet completed the questionnaire I would appreciate your doing so.

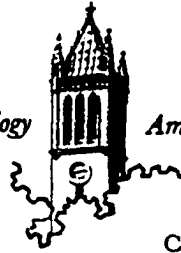
Your willingness to participate is important for the study's success. I do hope that you will aid in the effort to learn more about foster home satisfaction. Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

  
Kathy Sampson

Family Environment Dept.  
Iowa State University

Iowa State University of Science and Technology



Ames, Iowa 50010

College of Home Economics  
Department of Family Environment  
MacKay Hall  
Telephone 515-294-6316  
October 17, 1977

Within the past few weeks you received a questionnaire on foster parenthood. The questionnaire was sent to either foster parents who presently are or who in the past were foster parents with El Paso County Child Welfare. The study is now nearing completion and I would like to encourage you to complete and return the enclosed questionnaire.

Your willingness to participate can greatly aid in the study's success. Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

---

Kathy Sampson

Department of Family Environment  
Iowa State University  
Ames, Iowa 50011  
January 11, 1978

Dear Foster Parent:

Several months ago a questionnaire was sent to your home in conjunction with the Foster Family Research Project. If you did complete the questionnaire I would like to again thank you for your participation. If you did not complete the questionnaire I, nonetheless, would like to share with you the results of the study of which you could have been a part.

This study primarily sought to determine if a foster parent's ability to deal with uncertainty affected his/her satisfaction as a foster parent. I felt that a foster parent's ability to deal with uncertainty might be a factor in foster home satisfaction as foster parents are repeatedly called upon to cope with a great deal of uncertainty. There is uncertainty as to the length of stay of a foster child, the placement outcome of a foster child, high worker turnover, diverse policies and procedures, etc. However, in this study a foster parent's ability to deal with uncertainty was not found to affect his/her satisfaction with the foster home program.

The study did not find that foster parents who had left the program were less satisfied than foster parents who remained in the program. Foster mothers presently in the foster home program were the most satisfied and foster fathers who left the program were the most dissatisfied with the foster home program. Basically there was a high degree of satisfaction with the foster home program. However, neither foster parents presently in the foster home program nor those foster parents who had left the program were very satisfied with the amount of financial reimbursement and the agency's policies and procedures. Further study would need to be done to determine which policies and procedures are the most objectionable to foster parents.

Foster parents who left the agency had fewer agency staff involved in their home. It is difficult to know why this was the case. Foster parents who left the program also had foster children for shorter periods of time. Also fewer homes that left the foster home program had pre-placement visits and likewise they received less followup information on foster children after they left their homes. Therefore, foster homes that left the foster home program both knew less about the child when he entered and after he exited from their home than did foster homes presently in the program.

Foster parents who left the program were less satisfied than foster parents in the program with their relationship with agency staff, the relationship the spouse had to the foster child, the frequency of worker contact, the training program of foster parents, and the overall foster home program.

Another finding of interest to foster parents would be that foster homes during their first year of operation are homes at risk. More foster homes exit from the foster home program during the first year than at any other time.

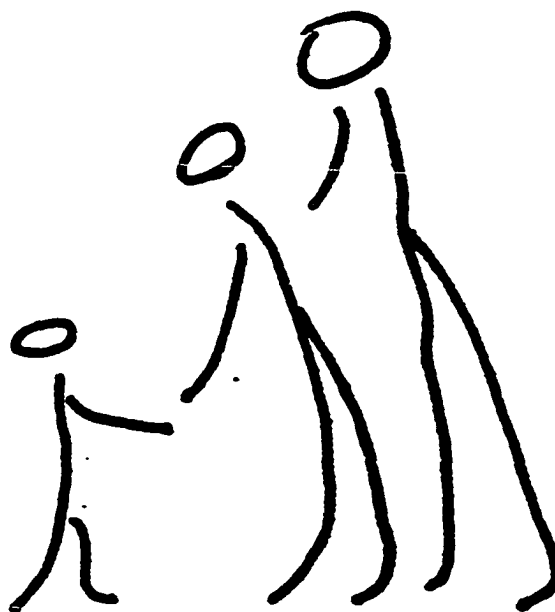
Very briefly I have shared with you some of the results of this study. If you would like a more comprehensive report feel free to contact me at: Ms. Kathleen Sampson, Rt. 2, Box 553, Las Cruces, New Mexico, 88001. In all reports only group data have been used; individual responses are kept totally confidential. Again, thanks for your contribution to the successful completion of this study.

Sincerely,

Kathleen P. Sampson  
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE, SCALES, AND PERMISSION LETTER





This study is being conducted to help us learn more about foster homes. We are particularly interested in how you felt about different aspects of the foster home program. Your answers will be combined with answers from many others in the foster home program that have also withdrawn to help us learn more about how previous foster families feel about the foster home program.

We appreciate your cooperation in making this research possible and want to assure you that all of the information you share with us will be treated confidentially.

El Paso County Child Welfare, Texas Department  
of Public Welfare, El Paso, Texas

and

Departments of Family Environment and Professional  
Studies, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa

1. How long were you a foster parent with El Paso County Child Welfare? (Check one)

☐ Less than 6 months

☐ 6 months to 1 year

☐ 1 to 3 years

☐ More than 3 years

2. As a foster parent you had how many children placed in your home? (Check one)

☐ 1 child

☐ 2 to 5 children

☐ 6 to 10 children

☐ More than 10 children

3. How long did a foster child usually stay in your home? (Check one)

☐ Less than a month

☐ 1 to 3 months

☐ 3 to 6 months

☐ 6 months to 1 year

☐ More than a year



For the following statements please check the level of agreement or disagreement that comes the closest to how you feel. For each item be sure that you have a check mark.

4. An expert who doesn't come up with a definite answer probably doesn't know too much.
5. There is really no such thing as a problem that can't be solved.
6. A good job is one where what is to be done and how it is to be done are always clear.
7. In the long run it is possible to get more done by tackling small, simple problems rather than large and complicated ones.
8. What we are used to is always preferable to what is unfamiliar.
9. A person who leads an even, regular life in which few surprises or unexpected happenings arise, really has a lot to be grateful for.
10. I like parties where I know most of the people more than ones where all or most of the people are complete strangers.
11. The sooner we all acquire similar values and ideals the better.
12. I would like to live in a foreign country for a while.
13. People who fit their lives to a schedule probably miss most of the joy of living.
14. It is more fun to tackle a complicated problem than to solve a simple one.
15. Often the most interesting and stimulating people are those who don't mind being different and original.

[illegible]

16. People who insist upon a yes or no answer just don't know how complicated things really are.
17. Many of our most important decisions are based upon insufficient information.
18. Teachers or supervisors who hand out vague assignments give a chance for one to show initiative and originality.
19. A good teacher is one who makes you wonder about your way of looking at things.

For the following questions circle the best answer.

20. When a placement was made I knew what the outcome would be
21. When a placement was made I knew how long the child would stay . . . . .
22. Before a foster child came to live in my home a pre-placement visit was made . . . . .
23. After a foster child left my home I heard information about that child . . . . .
24. After a foster child left my home I heard from that child
25. I found it difficult to share parental responsibility with the agency . . . . .
26. I found it difficult to share parental responsibility with the natural parents . . . . .

AGREE			DISAGREE		
Strong	Mod- erate	Slight	Strong	Mod- erate	Slight

NEVER

SOMETIMES

OFTEN

USUALLY

ALWAYS



..... N ..... S ..... O ..... U ..... A .....

..... N ..... S ..... O ..... U ..... A .....

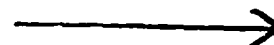
..... N ..... S ..... O ..... U ..... A .....

..... N ..... S ..... O ..... U ..... A .....

..... N ..... S ..... O ..... U ..... A .....

..... N ..... S ..... O ..... U ..... A .....

..... N ..... S ..... O ..... U ..... A .....



27. How many own or adopted children presently live in your household?

\_\_\_\_ (no. of own or adopted children in household)

28. Your foster family primarily cared for:

\_\_\_\_ infants and toddlers

\_\_\_\_ pre-schoolers

\_\_\_\_ school-age children (grades 1-6)

\_\_\_\_ teenagers

\_\_\_\_ no specific age group

29. At any one time how many foster children did you usually have in your home? (Check one)

\_\_\_\_ 1 foster child

\_\_\_\_ 2 foster children

\_\_\_\_ 3 foster children

\_\_\_\_ 4 or more foster children

If 4 or more, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

30. The number of agency staff usually directly involved in your home was: (Check one)

\_\_\_\_ 2

\_\_\_\_ 3

\_\_\_\_ 4 or more

31. Your family's current annual income from all sources before taxes is: (Check one)

☐ Less than \$6000  
☐ \$6000 to \$8999  
☐ \$9000 to \$11,999  
☐ \$12,000 to \$15,999  
☐ More than \$16,000

32. In making a decision as to whether or not to accept a foster child for placement or ask for his removal from your home whom did you consult for advice? (Circle yes or no for each item)

Spouse (Husband or Wife)	Yes	No
Children	Yes	No
Agency staff	Yes	No
Other (Please specify)	_____	

33. The thing I liked the best about the foster home program was:

\_\_\_\_\_

34. The thing I liked the least about the foster home program was:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



The next group of questions will ask for your level of satisfaction with various aspects of the foster home program. Please circle the number that best indicates your level of feeling.

How satisfied were you with:

35. the age of foster children placed in your home . . . . .
36. the sex of foster children placed in your home . . . . .
37. the number of foster children placed in your home . . . . .
38. the length of time foster children remained in your home.
39. the relationship you had with the foster children . . . . .
40. the relationship of foster children to your own children.
41. the relationship of foster children to your spouse. . . . .
42. the relationship you had with the foster home coordinator
43. the relationship you had with other agency staff . . . . .
44. the number of staff involved in your home . . . . .
45. the frequency of worker contact. . . . .
46. the worker's understanding of foster parent concerns . . .
47. the agency policies and procedures . . . . .
48. the amount of financial reimbursement for foster care . . .
49. sharing parental responsibility for the child with the agency and natural parents . . . . .
50. agency-sponsored social events for foster parents . . . . .
51. initial training given foster parents . . . . .
52. ongoing training given foster parents . . . . .
53. the over-all foster home program . . . . .

Using this scale please rate your level of feeling for each item listed below. Please circle the number that best indicates your degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. A neutral response can be indicated by number 5.

	Very Satisfied				Neutral		Very Dissatisfied			
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5 . . 6 . . 7 . . 8 . . 9 . . 10										
0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5 . . 6 . . 7 . . 8 . . 9 . . 10										
0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5 . . 6 . . 7 . . 8 . . 9 . . 10										
0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5 . . 6 . . 7 . . 8 . . 9 . . 10										
0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5 . . 6 . . 7 . . 8 . . 9 . . 10										
0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5 . . 6 . . 7 . . 8 . . 9 . . 10										
0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5 . . 6 . . 7 . . 8 . . 9 . . 10										
0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5 . . 6 . . 7 . . 8 . . 9 . . 10										
0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5 . . 6 . . 7 . . 8 . . 9 . . 10										
0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5 . . 6 . . 7 . . 8 . . 9 . . 10										
0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5 . . 6 . . 7 . . 8 . . 9 . . 10										
0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5 . . 6 . . 7 . . 8 . . 9 . . 10										
0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5 . . 6 . . 7 . . 8 . . 9 . . 10										
0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5 . . 6 . . 7 . . 8 . . 9 . . 10										
0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5 . . 6 . . 7 . . 8 . . 9 . . 10										
0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5 . . 6 . . 7 . . 8 . . 9 . . 10										
0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5 . . 6 . . 7 . . 8 . . 9 . . 10										
0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5 . . 6 . . 7 . . 8 . . 9 . . 10										
0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5 . . 6 . . 7 . . 8 . . 9 . . 10										
0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5 . . 6 . . 7 . . 8 . . 9 . . 10										
0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5 . . 6 . . 7 . . 8 . . 9 . . 10										
0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5 . . 6 . . 7 . . 8 . . 9 . . 10										

→

54. Your age.

\_\_\_\_\_ years

55. Your sex. (Check one)

\_\_\_\_\_ female

\_\_\_\_\_ male

56. Your marital status. (Check one)

\_\_\_\_\_ married

\_\_\_\_\_ divorced

\_\_\_\_\_ single

\_\_\_\_\_ widowed

57. Your employment status. (Check one)

\_\_\_\_\_ employed fulltime

\_\_\_\_\_ employed parttime

\_\_\_\_\_ unemployed

\_\_\_\_\_ homemaker

\_\_\_\_\_ retired

58. Your educational background. (Check one)

\_\_\_\_\_ Less than 12th grade

\_\_\_\_\_ High school graduate

\_\_\_\_\_ Less than 4 years of college

\_\_\_\_\_ College graduate

THANKS!

### Questionnaire Items

The items for each scale are taken from the original questionnaire; the coding procedure for each scale is given.

#### Budner's Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale

1. An expert who doesn't come up with a definite answer probably doesn't know too much.<sup>1</sup>
2. There is really no such thing as a problem that can't be solved.<sup>1</sup>
3. A good job is one where what is to be done and how it is to be done are always clear.<sup>1</sup>
4. In the long run it is possible to get more done by tackling small, simple problems rather than large and complicated ones.<sup>1</sup>
5. What we are used to is always preferable to what is unfamiliar.<sup>1</sup>
6. A person who leads an even, regular life in which few surprises or unexpected happenings arise, really has a lot to be grateful for.<sup>1</sup>
7. I like parties where I know most of the people more than ones where all or most of the people are complete strangers.<sup>1</sup>
8. The sooner we all acquire similar values and ideals the better.<sup>1</sup>
9. I would like to live in a foreign country for awhile.
10. People who fit their lives to a schedule probably miss most of the joy of living.
11. It is more fun to tackle a complicated problem than to solve a simple one.
12. Often the most interesting and stimulating people are those who don't mind being different and original.
13. People who insist upon a yes or no answer just don't know how complicated things really are.

---

<sup>1</sup>The items were coded 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 respectively for strongly agree, moderately agree, slightly agree, slightly disagree, moderately disagree, and strongly disagree. Remaining items were coded in the reverse order.

14. Many of our most important decisions are based upon insufficient information.
15. Teachers or supervisors who hand out vague assignments give a chance for one to show initiative and originality.
16. A good teacher is one who makes you wonder about your way of looking at things.

Foster Home Satisfaction Scale

How satisfied are you with:

1. The age of foster children placed in your home.
2. The sex of foster children placed in your home.
3. The number of foster children placed in your home.
4. The length of time foster children remain in your home.
5. The relationship you have with the foster children.
6. The relationship of foster children to your own children.
7. The relationship of foster children to your spouse.
8. The relationship you have with the foster home coordinator.
9. The relationship you have with other agency staff.
10. The number of staff involved in your home.
11. The frequency of worker contact.
12. The worker's understanding of foster parent concerns.
13. The agency's policies and procedures.
14. The amount of financial reimbursement for foster care.
15. Sharing parental responsibility for the child with the agency and natural parents.
16. Agency-sponsored social events for foster parents.
17. Initial training given foster parents.
18. Ongoing training given foster parents.

19. The overall foster home program.

The items were coded 1 through 10 with 0 being very satisfied, 5 being neutral, and 10 being very dissatisfied.

Iowa State University of Science and Technology



Ames, Iowa 50010

College of Home Economics  
Department of Family Environment  
MacKay Hall  
Telephone 515-294-6316

Duke University Press  
Box 6697  
College Station  
Durham, North Carolina 27708

Dear Sir:

I am interested in utilizing Budner's 16-item Intolerance of Ambiguity scale in my doctoral research study. As this instrument is copyrighted by Duke University Press I am writing to you to obtain cost information on this measure. As I hope to begin data collection yet this summer I would appreciate a response at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Kathleen P. Sampson  
Kathleen P. Sampson

23 June 1977

Permission is hereby granted to reprint the above-cited material only for the purpose indicated and for one-time use only. The complete credit line, including a copyright citation, should be given.

Muriel Roll (Mrs.) Muriel Roll